

THE ARTICLES OF THE APOSTLES' CREED.

XI. "THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS."

THE origin and the original meaning of *sanctorum communionem* are still obscure. The oldest commentator of whom we can say with tolerable certainty that he not only made use of this idea in this connection, but that he also possessed it in his Creed, is Nicetas, about the year 400,¹ to whom we have often already referred. We see that he understood *sanctorum* of persons, and indeed, as it appears from the context, of all the saints and believers of all times. Further, *communio* is an abstract term to him, a relationship of each individual to these saints, and therefore a communion with them. Finally, it counts with him as a blessing to which the believer in *one* Church shall hereafter attain by virtue of his belonging to it and on the supposition that he will hold fast to this communion with the Catholic Church.² This reference to the future gives a

¹ I do not know of any exhaustive dissertation on this obscure personage. I assume that the sermon published in Caspari, *Anecdota*, pp. 341-360, is identical with that mentioned by Gennadius, *Vir. ill.* 22, and called *liber de symbolo*, and that the author was really Niceas or Nicetas, Bishop of Romatiana. Romatiana (or Romesiana, Remesiana, etc.) was situated where Bela or Ak-Palanka now stands, between Nisch and Pirot in Servia. It seems to me that the author of the sermon cannot be identified with the Bishop Nicetas of Aquileia, to whom Leo the Great wrote in 458, because it seems incomprehensible that the Creed of Aquileia should have been so fully developed in the time between Rufinus and this Bishop of Aquileia as we must then assume. For example, we find missing the *unicum* of the second Article and the *descensus* which Rufinus possessed, and which the Church of Aquileia, according to the notice in Venantius Fortunatus in the 6th century had again, or rather had always possessed. Our Nicetas is much more probably the missionary bishop of Dacia, who is praised by Paulinus of Nola (*Ep.* 29, 14; *Poema* 17 and 27, Migne 61, col. 321, 483, 652). This theory is not affected by the fact that this sermon on the Creed is ten years older than the *Expositio* of Rufinus, and that Rufinus meant to include Nicetas among the earlier preachers on the Creed. (See p. 10 n. 1, Germ. ed.).

² At the conclusion of the sentences translated above, p. 87 (Germ. ed.), and a quotation from Col. 1, 20, he says: "Ergo in hac una ecclesia crede te *communione* consecuturum esse *sanctorum*. Scito unam hanc esse ecclesiam

narrower meaning to the idea than would appear from the context. The saints with whom the Christian first hopes to have this communion in the future, that is to say if he dies in a state of salvation, can only be those with whom he stood in no direct communication here on earth, that is those already dead. This connection is elsewhere more clearly expressed but presented in such a manner that the confession of "the communion of saints" expresses the hope and the wish to be preserved with departed Christians in the enjoyment and fellowship of hope during the whole earthly life.¹ Again, another old commentator remarks that whereas during this life the gifts of the Holy Spirit appear to be unequally divided, they will be shared in common in eternity, so that each single saint will receive yonder that which was lacking in him of spiritual gifts in this life by participation in the virtues of others;² that is to say in a concrete form—the thief on the cross will not be conscious of any defect in eternity when he compares himself with an Apostle John, who, during a long and holy life, returned the love of Him who had first loved him, Martha will not stand behind Mary. A spiritual community of goods, amongst all the members of the Church, is set forth as the goal of the Christian's hope. Whilst here, the saints, according to the Biblical view and that of the ancient Church, are referred to as plainly as possible as members of the community of believers, Faustus of Riez interprets the saints in a much narrower sense, and makes

catolicam in omni orbe terræ constitutam, cuius *communione* debes firmiter tenere." A *Missale Florentinum* in Caspari, IV. 301 f., seems to be dependent on Nicetas. But the text is probably not in order. Cf. Mone, *Latēnische und griechische Messen*, p. 35, "[*da nobis*] in *communione* omnium sanctorum remissionem omnium nostrorum criminum."

¹ *Pseudoaugust. Sermo 242* (ed. Bass, XVI. 1302 [falsely 243], 1304): "Sanctorum *communione*, id est cum illis Sanctis, qui in hac, quam suscepimus fide defuncti sunt, societate et spei *communione* teneamur." The conjunctive is afterwards "*credamus*." The address *de symbolo* (Bass, XVII. 1960), which is compiled out of this amongst many others, mixes all together.

² *Pseudoaugust. Sermo 240*.

use of this opportunity to speak of the worship of saints and their relics.¹ He does not give any explanation of this view; for it need not be said that *sanctorum communionem* cannot be interpreted "the worship of saints." We only see that Faustus had narrowed the meaning of saints. But this remained, I imagine, an isolated case. Others, again, move in quite another direction, making *sanctorum* neuter and referring it to the Sacraments, especially to the Lord's Supper. They understand *sanctorum communionem* as the participation in the holy things and holy gifts offered in the Sacraments. This is the view, if I rightly understand it, of a sermon wrongly attributed to Augustine,² of a free paraphrase of the younger Apostles' Creed from the old Irish Church,³ and of an old French translation.⁴ The

¹ *Hom. II. de symbolo* (Caspari, *Anecd.* p. 338), a warning against exaggeration; *tract. de symbolo* (Caspari, IV. 273), controverting the opponents of saint worship. Caspari's warning in the introduction of the latter volume, p. iv., "against hasty conclusions" seems to have been given in vain.

² *Pseudoaugust. Sermo* 241: "Credentes ergo sanctam ecclesiam catholicam, sanctorum habentes communionem, quia, ubi est fides sancta, ibi est et *sancta communio*, credere vos quoque in corpore resurrectionem et remissionem peccatorum oportet. Omne sacramentum baptismi in hoc constat, ut resurrectionem corporum et remissionem peccatorum nobis a deo praestanda credamus." I understand by *sancta communio* the right celebration of the Lord's Supper, which is set in relation to the resurrection and the forgiveness of sins, just as baptism is set subsequently.

³ It cannot be understood in any other way, since in this creed, which is contained in a MS. of the 7th century, *abremissa peccatorum* is placed before *sanctorum communio*, so that the latter is separated from *ecclesiam catholicam* (Caspari, II. 284). Forgiveness of sins is placed first because it refers to baptism, while "participation in holy things" is naturally placed second because it refers to the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. I do not entirely understand Caspari's objection to this view, II. 287, which he derives from capital letters in *Sanctorum* instead of *sanctorum* (is this in the MS. itself?). Lastly, the form *abremissa* instead of *remissio*, and the last sentence, *haec omnia credo in deum*, point to an intimate connection with the circles from which the younger Apostles' Creed went forth. Compare Faustus in Caspari, *Anecd.* p. 338 n. 11; *de spir. s.* 1, 2 (Engelbrecht, p. 104, 25-27, where both may be read). It remains unexplained how a later Armenian Creed coincides with the Irish order in "ecclesiam sanctam, remissionem peccatorum, communionem sanctorum" (Catergian, *De fidei symbolo, quo Armeni utuntur*, Viennæ, 1893, p. 39; it is given otherwise in German in Caspari, II. 11, cf. p. 46).

⁴ See Hahn, p. 58: *La communion des saintes choses*. Theobaldus Brito

great variety of translations in comparatively ancient times proves at all events that the formula itself must be much older than the explanations which differ so widely from each other. It was an old heirloom even in the time of Nicetas of Romatiana and still more so in the time of Faustus of Riez,¹ of which the meaning was no longer clear and certain.

It is very remarkable that not one of the old commentators on the Creed give the meaning which the words unquestionably possessed in the language of the African Church about the year 400.² The Donatists, like the Catholics, understand *communio* to signify community of the Churches and indeed in the concrete sense of this word of ours. They called the fellowship of orthodox Christians, the Church itself, *sanctorum communio*. It was therefore synonymous there with *congregatio sanctorum* or *ecclesia*. If we might accept this as the meaning of the same words in the Creed, it would be, as Luther and the Evangelicals generally understand it, an explanation in apposition to *sanctam ecclesiam catholicam*. But it is very improbable that this was the original meaning, for then the disappearance from tradition as early as 400 of the exact original meaning, and the luxuriant growth of the most diverse meanings in after times would remain an unsolved riddle.

(Caspari, *Anecd.* p. 300), in his commentary, lays great stress at all events on the Sacraments, but appears to understand *sancti* of the blessed dead.

¹ This is confirmed by the fact that not a few commentaries pass it over in silence; for example, one belonging to Carlovingian times, quoted by Caspari, IV. 285; also that in the *Missale Gallic. vetus* in Mabillon, *Liturg. Gall.* p. 342. Even Nicetas and Faustus do not give a real explanation (see above, p. 136).

² G. v. Zezschwitz, in his *System of Catechising*, II.² 1. 123, mentions as the only three passages which have as yet been referred to: the letter of the Donatists to Flavius Marcellinus (*Aug. ed.* Bass, XVII. 2532); the Donatist decree of excommunication in August., *Enarr. in psalm.* 36, *sermo* 2. 20 (Bass, V. 369); and a passage in Augustine (*sermo* 52. 6; Bass, VII. 304). The meaning in all these passages is quite clear; synonymous expressions are heaped up in the first. Perhaps Mone's Fragment, which is mentioned on p. 136, note ² should be placed here.

The prevailing practice in the African language is of little use as a proof, for the African Church did not possess this article in their Creed. The interpretation of these words in the Creed which have been quoted have this in common, that all unite in taking *communio* in an abstract sense. May not this be the origin of the tradition which has become so vague? Further, if for the reasons given this article of the Creed must have been contained even in very early times in the creed of some one Church and very probably in the South-Gallican, it is not impossible, but rather highly probable, that the Latin words are the translation of a Greek original. This could scarcely have been anything else than τὴν κοινωνίαν τῶν ἁγίων, or better, ἁγίων κοινωνίαν,¹ which, according to the language of the Greek Church, could only be interpreted as "Participation in the holy things." The belief was thus expressed that in the Sacraments and through the same, especially in the Holy Communion, the gifts offered therein were really received. For it is not the Sacrament as an action but the consecrated elements and the miraculous gifts offered therein which are τὰ ἅγια.² And yet it is remarkable that Augustine, who had not *sanctorum communio* either in his native Milanese Creed or in the African, should speak of *communio sacramentorum* in one of his sermons on the former, placing it just where Nicetas and others speak of *sanctorum communio*. He, unlike the Donatist sect, extols the holy

¹ Cf. the Greek translations in Caspari, II. 12, 20, 23. With reference to the meaning of the Greek expression itself see Caspari, II. 46; v. Zezschwitz, *passim*, p. 122, and the treatise of Caspari, which he quotes, but which I cannot obtain at present.

² Already *The Teaching of the Apostles* (c. 9) refers the verse Matt. vii. 6 (τὸ ἅγιον) to the Lord's Supper. The holy gift offered in the Lord's Supper belongs only to those made holy by Baptism. According to ancient Liturgies like that of Jerusalem in the time of Cyril (*Catech. mystag.* v. 18), and that of Antioch in the time of Chrysostom (Hammond, *The Ancient Liturgy of Antioch*, p. 17), the Priest immediately before the Administration called: τὰ ἅγια τοῖς ἁγίοις. Cf. *Const. Apost.* viii. 12, ed. Lagarde, p. 259, 13; Swainson, *Greek Liturgies*, p. 64, 136, 169.

Church for allowing even the wicked to remain in sacramental fellowship, and committing judgment of them to God.¹ When he uses side by side with this the expression *sacramentorum participatio*² for the same thing, it seems as though it must be a different translation of the same Greek original. In Latin as in German it is difficult to give an exact translation of *κοινωνία*.³ *Ἁγία* would certainly first suggest to Greeks the Lord's Supper; still the comprehensiveness of the term would admit quite as well of a reference to the gifts offered in Baptism, and therefore to the thought of both Sacraments. In many Oriental creeds Baptism is referred to just in this place.⁴ Besides, who can deny that the mention of the Sacraments in the Creed, and specially after the Church, is quite in place? If this was the original meaning of *sanctorum communio*, it is plain that it did not mean: I believe that Sacraments exist, but I believe that I in the Sacraments partake of the holy things of the other world; the Consecrated Bread which I eat with the community that keeps the feast and the Consecrated Cup which I drink with them are truly the Communion of the Body and Blood of Christ; I believe that

¹ *Sermo* 214, 11 (Bass, VIII. 948); cf. *Epist. contra Donat. de unitate eccl.* 74 (Bass, XII. 488). I may remark in passing that the Cod. Remigiensis, on which the printed text of the sermon in the Benedictine edition solely depends, is now in Bamberg (E. III. 21).

² *De catechiz. rud.* 8 (§ 12, Bass, XI. 665); *de baptismo contra Donat.* VII. 93 (Bass, XII. 254).

³ Cf. my dissertation on Phil. i. 3-11 in the *Zeitschr. f. Kirchl. Wissenschaft*, 1885, p. 190, esp. n. 4.

⁴ Cf. the Creed of Jerusalem, p. 390 *supra*, and the Nicene-Constantinopolitan, besides Caspari, I. 3, 5, 117; II. 7. To this belongs also the conclusion of the rule of faith in Aphraates, *Hom.* I. p. 22: "and that we believe in the resurrection of the dead, and further believe in the mystery (sacrament) of baptism. That is the faith of the Church of God." Cf. further, in spite of its legendary setting, the very original Creed in the appendix of the Sacramentary of Bobbio (Mabillon, *Mus. ital.* I. 2, 396): "Credo in ecclesiam sanctam.—Per baptismum sanctum remissionem peccatorum.—Carnis resurrectionem in vitam æternam. This points, just like the Canon of the Bible which follows, to Eastern influences. Cf. *Hist. of the Canon*, II. 287.

the water of Baptism is not mere water but a bath of the New Birth.

Though I, for the reasons which I have given and suggested, consider it very probable that this Article was originally intended to witness to belief in the efficacy of the Sacraments, there is nothing I should consider so foolish as to desire to build practical conclusions upon this interpretation of such a disputable and abstruse view. Amongst such we must reckon the early introduction of another translation instead of that which Luther introduced and brought into prominence, "The community of Saints."¹ The thoughts which Luther worked out in the long Catechism, together with the justification of his translation and his view of the Article "as a gloss or explanation" of the Article on the Church, are much more valuable than a translation which may possibly, though only just possibly, represent more exactly the original meaning. The omission of the words on account of the uncertainty about their original meaning would be just as foolish as would be the mutilation of the whole Creed on the same grounds. What would become of the Bible if analogous principles were applied to it? The community confesses in these words of the Creed, according to the interpretation and meaning in use amongst us, a truly Christian and Evangelical truth. To this all would gladly subscribe, who think that the author of this Article of the Creed wished to express by it a belief, which is just as Christian and not less Evangelical, that the Sacraments which Jesus insti-

¹ In opposition to the translation which preceded his "The Communion of Saints," of which he says "that it has so worked its way into use that it would be difficult to eradicate it, and the alteration of one word might soon be called heresy" (Müller, p. 457). The Roman Catechism, it is true, also takes *sanctorum communio* as a kind of explanation of the article on the Church (§ 65, *veluti explanationem quandam*), but explains the idea itself in an abstract sense of the inner communion of Christians with each other and with God and Christ (§ 164) in which they participate by love (§ 166-169) and by fellowship in the Sacraments (§ 165).

tuted in the Church still have the same efficacy by virtue of His Institution and transmit the holy gifts which were connected with them by His promise.

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DIFFICULT PASSAGES IN ROMANS.

VI. THROUGH OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

IN Romans.iii. 21, 22 St. Paul asserted his first fundamental doctrine of righteousness or justification through faith; and in verses 24-26 a second doctrine inseparable from it, viz. justification through the death of Christ. The former of these doctrines he illustrated in chapter iv. by comparison with the story of Abraham, who through faith obtained fulfilment of a divine promise and became father of many nations. He also shows in chapter v. 1, 2 that justification through faith involves peace with God and gives exultant hope of glory. In the rest of the chapter the apostle draws from his second great doctrine important inferences personal and collective.

The dominating thought giving unity to the whole chapter finds expression in the phrase *through our Lord Jesus Christ* in verse 1, in verse 11 at the close of the first division of the chapter, and again, with slight change of order, in verse 21 at the end of the chapter. Equivalent expressions, keeping before us the same thought, are found in verses 2, 9, 17. More specific phrases are found in verse 10, *through the death of His Son*; in verse 18, *through one decree of righteousness*; and in verse 19, *through the obedience of the one*. This use of *διὰ* with gen. to describe Christ's relation to the work of salvation is a conspicuous feature of St. Paul's teaching. So 2 Corinthians v. 18, "reconciled us to Himself through Christ"; Ephesians i.