

## NESTORIUS'S VERSION OF THE NICENE CREED.

IN his article on 'The Council of Constantinople and the Nicene Creed' in the JOURNAL of last January Mr F. J. Badcock writes (p. 208):—

'In the year 430 Nestorius, at the Council of Ephesus, quoted the words *σαρκωθέντα ἐκ Πνεύματος Ἁγίου καὶ Μαρίας τῆς παρθένου* as from N [the Nicene Creed], and in his letter to Pope Celestine he quotes the same sentence, "from the words of the holy Fathers of Nicæa"; and Cyril corrects his error in *Adv. Nest.* i 8. But this was not all that Nestorius's version of N contained, for in ch. 6 we find also *τὸν σταυρωθέντα καὶ ταφέντα* and *τὸν κατελθόντα ἐκ τῶν οὐρανῶν δι' ἡμᾶς.*'

A piece of evidence has escaped Mr Badcock, which would have enabled him to say much more nearly what was and what was not in 'Nestorius's version of N'. This is to be found in Nestorius's own Apology, a work which has reached us only in a Syriac version, in which it bears the title *The Treatise of Heraclides of Damascus*. The Syriac text has been published by Father Paul Bedjan,<sup>1</sup> and it has been translated into French by M. Nau<sup>2</sup>; but it seems that there is room for a note directing more particular attention to the passage on the Nicene Creed.

On p. 208 of Bedjan's edition we have the beginning of what was a formal citation *in extenso* of a Creed which Nestorius ascribes to 'our Fathers assembled at Nicaea'. He is dealing with the Council of Ephesus, and he quotes the text of the Nicene Creed in order to comment on it and shew that it bears out his teaching. He also plainly implies that the formula he cites was that affirmed and enforced at Ephesus. Unfortunately the unique MS of Nestorius's Apology is imperfect, and just at this point some pages have been torn away. The result is that the Creed breaks off with the words 'that is, of the essence of the Father'. Happily, however, the loss of the remainder here is all but made good by quotations which follow shortly after. On pp. 212–213 of Bedjan's text Nestorius goes on in a vigorous passage to cite nearly all the rest: not indeed continuously, but in pieces of such

<sup>1</sup> *Le livre d'Héraclide de Damas*. Leipzig 1910.

<sup>2</sup> *Nestorius: le livre d'Héraclide de Damas*; traduit en français par F. Nau. Paris 1910.

extent, and with so much insistence and repetition, that reconstruction becomes easy and fairly sure.

I give first of all a literal translation of the piece of Creed on p. 208 (Bedjan) and of the passage on pp. 212-213 containing the further quotations.<sup>1</sup> Afterwards the text may be reconstructed by the simple process of discarding the repetitions.

A (Bedjan, p. 208). ‘*The Faith which was set forth by our Fathers at Nicaea.*’<sup>2</sup> We believe in one God the Father almighty, maker of all things visible and invisible; and in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the only-begotten, who of the Father was begotten,—that is, from the essence (*ἰθὺθᾶ*) of the Father,— . . .’

The next passage, though continuous, I divide for convenience of reference into paragraphs, labelled (α)-(ι), and I draw attention to the more substantial quotations from the Creed by disposing them in short lines in the customary way. I italicize each piece of text which appears for the first time.

B (Bedjan, pp. 212-213). (α) ‘The Fathers also, adhering to the divine Scriptures, said, “one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son”, (starting) from the *πρόσωπον* of the union; and then they teach what (*or* who) they were that were united, and unto what. “He”, say they, “who was begotten of the Father, only-begotten”: who is He?’

(β) “Our Lord Jesus Christ  
the Son of God, the only-begotten—  
that is, from the *οὐσία* of the Father—  
*God from God,*  
*and Light from Light,*  
*true God from true God:*  
*begotten, and not made;*  
*son-of-the-nature*<sup>3</sup> *of the Father;*  
*through whom all was (made) that (is) in heaven and in earth.”*

(γ) Of which are you speaking, O Fathers? of something else, or of that which you wrote above? “The one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the only-begotten”: who is this, and from whom? “From the Father:

(δ) true God from true God:  
begotten, and not made;  
*who for us men and for our salvation came down.”*

(ε) Who is this? say, O Fathers, to me and to him (Cyril) and to all: who is it? another, or the Only-begotten? “This one (*sc.* the Only-begotten) we teach you, and not another;

<sup>1</sup> These passages will be found in Nau’s translation at pp. 125 and 128 respectively.

<sup>2</sup> This is a rubricated heading in the MS.

<sup>3</sup> A common Syriac equivalent for *ὁμοούσιος*.

(ζ) who for us men and for our salvation came down, *and became-incarnate of the Holy Spirit and of Mary the Virgin, who also became-man.*"<sup>1</sup>

(η) For as far as "He came down", "He became-incarnate", and "He became-man", they taught us concerning the things that belong to Christ's Divinity; but by "He became-incarnate", concerning His union with flesh; and thenceforth concerning the flesh in which "the one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the only-begotten" became-incarnate. For does not that, "of the Holy Spirit and of Mary the Virgin", teach us about the birth in flesh? "The one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God": what is His nature? That which His mother also is, from whom was born the passible flesh.

(θ) "*And He suffered, and rose the third day, and ascended to heaven; and cometh to judge the living and the dead.*"

(ι) Who is this? "The one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the only-begotten." In both regards—as son of the nature of the Father and son of the nature of the mother—they call Him "the one Lord Jesus Christ": not God the Word by nature in both regards, but "the one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the only-begotten". For into a *πρόσωπον* is the union, not into a nature: (it is) not (a union) into an *οὐσία*, but a union of *οὐσίαι*.'

If to passage A be added the italicized pieces in passage B (β), (δ), (ζ), (θ), the result is a Creed which is, on the Nicene basis, complete except for the clause on the Holy Ghost, which Nestorius had no occasion to quote. By putting the obvious Greek for the Syriac we can reconstruct Nestorius's version of the Nicene Creed, as embodied in his Apology, with substantial accuracy. But before doing this there is a point which needs consideration. In passage A we find the order, 'the Son of God, the only-begotten, who of the Father was begotten'; and in passage B we four times meet with the quotation, 'The one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the only-begotten', viz. at (β), (γ), (η), (ι). At first I thought that Nestorius's version of N here must have had *μονογενῆ* before *γεννηθέντα ἐκ τοῦ πατρὸς* (as in C<sup>2</sup>) instead of after it (as in N), and that it must have run: *καὶ εἰς ἓνα κύριον Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ θεοῦ τὸν μονογενῆ, τὸν ἐκ τοῦ πατρὸς γεννηθέντα, τουτέστιν ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας τοῦ πατρὸς, θεὸν ἐκ θεοῦ, κτλ.* But on further consideration I am disposed to think that the Syriac order in passage A, whereby *μονογενῆ* is apparently placed before, instead of after, *γεννηθέντα ἐκ τοῦ πατρὸς*, is due merely to the translator, who eased the Syriac construction on this occasion by bringing the adjective *μονογενῆ* back nearer to

<sup>1</sup> In the Syr. 'became-incarnate' and 'became-man' are denominative verbs from the substantives 'flesh' and 'man' respectively.

<sup>2</sup> Sc. the 'Constantinopolitanum'.

its subject. Whatever be the explanation of the order in passage A, it is certain that Nestorius knew the original Nicene form of the clause, for in passage B (a) we find him ascribing it explicitly to the Nicene Fathers: 'He, say they, that was begotten of the Father, only-begotten' (clearly *γεννηθέντα ἐκ τοῦ πατρὸς μονογενῆ*). Moreover if we look at B (β) we see that, while *γεννηθέντα ἐκ τοῦ πατρὸς* is there omitted, *τουτέστιν ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας τοῦ πατρὸς* comes (as in the real N) next to, and as an immediate explanation of, *μονογενῆ*. As regards the omission of *γεννηθέντα ἐκ τοῦ πατρὸς* altogether before *μονογενῆ* in B (β), (γ), (η), (ι)—the passages referred to above—it may possibly be due to reminiscence of some other Creed, such as C; but on the other hand the formula 'the one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the only-begotten' is in those passages repeated rhetorically, as a sort of catchword, and the inclusion of 'begotten of the Father' before 'only-begotten' would not only be cumbrous, but would interfere with the argument. Nestorius is arguing in these passages that the Nicene Fathers introduced their teaching on the Son not by styling Him at the outset 'God the Word', but by giving Him titles which were applicable to both natures at once; so that attributes or functions specifically divine and others specifically human might not both be predicated either of God the Word alone or of the human nature alone, but, as Nestorius expresses it, of 'the πρόσωπον of the union'; which πρόσωπον, he held, was indicated by the names 'Christ' and 'Son'. Now Nestorius would regard *γεννηθέντα ἐκ τοῦ πατρὸς* rather as one of the divine attributes than as forming part of the intercommunicable titles; and so he would naturally omit the words when employing 'the one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the only-begotten' strictly as a title.

In the reconstruction which follows, then, I shall assume that Nestorius's version of the Nicene Creed had the true reading of N found in passage B (a), which was, in any case, known to Nestorius.

*Reconstruction of Nestorius's version of N.*

ܐܠܗܐ ܐܝܢ ܘܢܗܘ ܥܡ ܐܘܬܪܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ : ܕܥܘܠܡܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ	Πιστεύομεν εἰς ἕνα θεὸν πατέρα παντοκράτορα,
ܕܥܘܠܡܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ	πάντων ὁρατῶν τε <sup>1</sup> καὶ ἀορατῶν ποιητῆν.
ܕܥܘܠܡܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ ܕܥܘܠܡܐ	καὶ εἰς ἕνα κύριον Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν, τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ θεοῦ,

<sup>1</sup> Οἱ ὁρατῶν τε πάντων. The Syriac affords no indication of the original order.



'The 318 Fathers with one voice and one mouth and one mind rejected (the assertion) "that there was once when God the Word was not" . . . "and from the things that are not God the Word was begotten" . . . and "from another substance (qĕnōmā) and from another οὐσία" . . . and (that) God the Word "is changeable and corruptible" . . . For those who say these things of God the Word the Fathers *anathematize*.'

It is pretty evident from this passage that the anathemas in Nestorius's version were in practically the same form as in N. It need only be remarked that he lends no support to the reading ἡ κτιστόν.

If we turn back to the Creed reconstructed above we see that, so far as it goes, it differs from the original Nicene Creed only by the insertion of ἐκ πνεύματος ἁγίου καὶ Μαρίας τῆς παρθένου after σαρκωθέντα. It would seem that if Nestorius ever really quoted the further words τὸν σταυρωθέντα καὶ ταφέντα and τὸν κατελθόντα ἐκ τῶν οὐρανῶν δι' ἡμᾶς as belonging to N, he must have done so by some sort of inadvertence. One would like to know how early the practice originated of calling any Creed 'Nicene' into which the *homoousion* had been inserted.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Compare on this matter Mr C. H. Turner in *The History and Use of Creeds and Anathemas* (S.P.C.K. 1906) pp. 50-53, p. 55 note, and pp. 37-38. The case of Epiphanius Mr Badcock does not allow, as he thinks the Creed in his *Ancoratus* cxx was originally N. To the cases adduced by Mr Turner may be added that of the early Nestorian Narsai († *circa* 502) who attributes to 'the 318 priests' a Creed which is substantially identical with the present Nestorian formula (*Texts and Studies* viii 1 p. 6).