

**THE CREEDS OF ATHANASIUS,
SABELLIUS, AND
SWEDENBORG, EXAMINED AND
COMPARED WITH EACH OTHER**

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AUGUSTUS CLISSOLD

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BY THE
REV. AUGUSTUS CLISSOLD, M.A.

"Whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain."—*Hebrews* xii. 26.

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P R E F A C E.

WHEN great changes are apprehended as impending over great Institutions, they naturally give rise to great diversities of opinion. Two of the greatest changes which can befall any National Church are, in the present day, subjects of serious discussion. There is a change affecting the internal life of the Church, so far as this life is derived from the Athanasian Creed; and there is a change affecting its external life, in the form of proposed Secession, or else Disestablishment. Hence a variety of conflicting opinions. Some think it desirable that the Damnatory Clauses should be dispensed with, but they would preserve the rest of the Creed; some would preserve the whole Creed, but make it no part of Divine worship; some would retain the Creed, but make its use optional; some, while re-

taining the Creed, would make its use compulsory, and adopt an explanatory rubric. Some would professedly secede from their ministrations in the Church, if any alterations were made in the Creed or even in the use of the Creed; some would join the Liberation Society; and some secede from the Church altogether.

In the course of the present Tract a new element is introduced as the latent cause of the present agitation, namely, that of Prophecy; for if the Church be what it aims to be, a true Catholic Church, nay, according to some, the one great bulwark of Christianity, it is not unreasonable to presume, that it has a place in the scheme of Divine Providence; and, in this case, to omit the subject of Prophecy might be only to admit, that the destiny of the Church has no place in the Divine order of things, and consequently is unconnected with either the Present or the Future of Christendom.

It has, indeed, been supposed by some, that the old heresies have died out; and, as such, that there is no further use in denouncing them. Others have thought that they have never died out, but are always re-appearing, though, it may be, under new names; thus, for instance, that what is called Swedenborgianism is nothing more than a new name for the old Sabellianism; and as some of the clauses of the Athanasian Creed were introduced for the express purpose of condemning Sabellianism, the disuse of the Creed, it is thought, would tend to remove the only bulwark against this heresy; and therefore, says Mr. Maccoll—"I trust that the Athanasian Creed will be neither abolished nor altered. To do either would be to abandon the Faith, and to commit the Church of England to Sabellianism."

In the ensuing pages, we have pointed out the real relation of the Sabellian Creed to the Athanasian, at least in so far as

the doctrines of Sabellius are thought to be known; and having done this, we are the better enabled to perceive the relation of both to the doctrines of Swedenborg.

It seems impossible to disguise the fact, that, in the present day, the Athanasian Creed is itself upon its trial. This is the reason for which a Defence Committee has been formed; and the ensuing pages may serve to shew what are the responsibilities they have undertaken. That the Creed cannot remain as it is, and as it is interpreted by its most able advocates, the present Tract is designed to demonstrate; inasmuch as it is no longer any safeguard against either Tritheism or Sabellianism. In shewing its inadequacy in these respects, I have avoided as much as possible the metaphysical part of the subject; still it could not be avoided altogether without leaving the argument incomplete.

It has been said, that there may be a considerable difference between a Creed, and the

interpretation of a Creed: it is however certain, that there is no difference between a Creed and the meaning of the Creed. The interpretation of a Creed by its advocates is to them the meaning of the Creed.

Accordingly, in the ensuing pages, we have assumed the case of a person of ordinary attainments, pursuing his enquiries into the meaning of the Creed, on the principle expressed as follows by an earnest advocate of the Creed itself:—

“I am supposing that we *think* of what we say in solemn worship: that we endeavour to gain as clear a notion as we can of the meaning of the words we use, and of what we commit ourselves to by using them.”

THE PARK, STOKE NEWINGTON,

. January, 1873.