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THE
CHURCH OF ENGLAND CATECHISM.



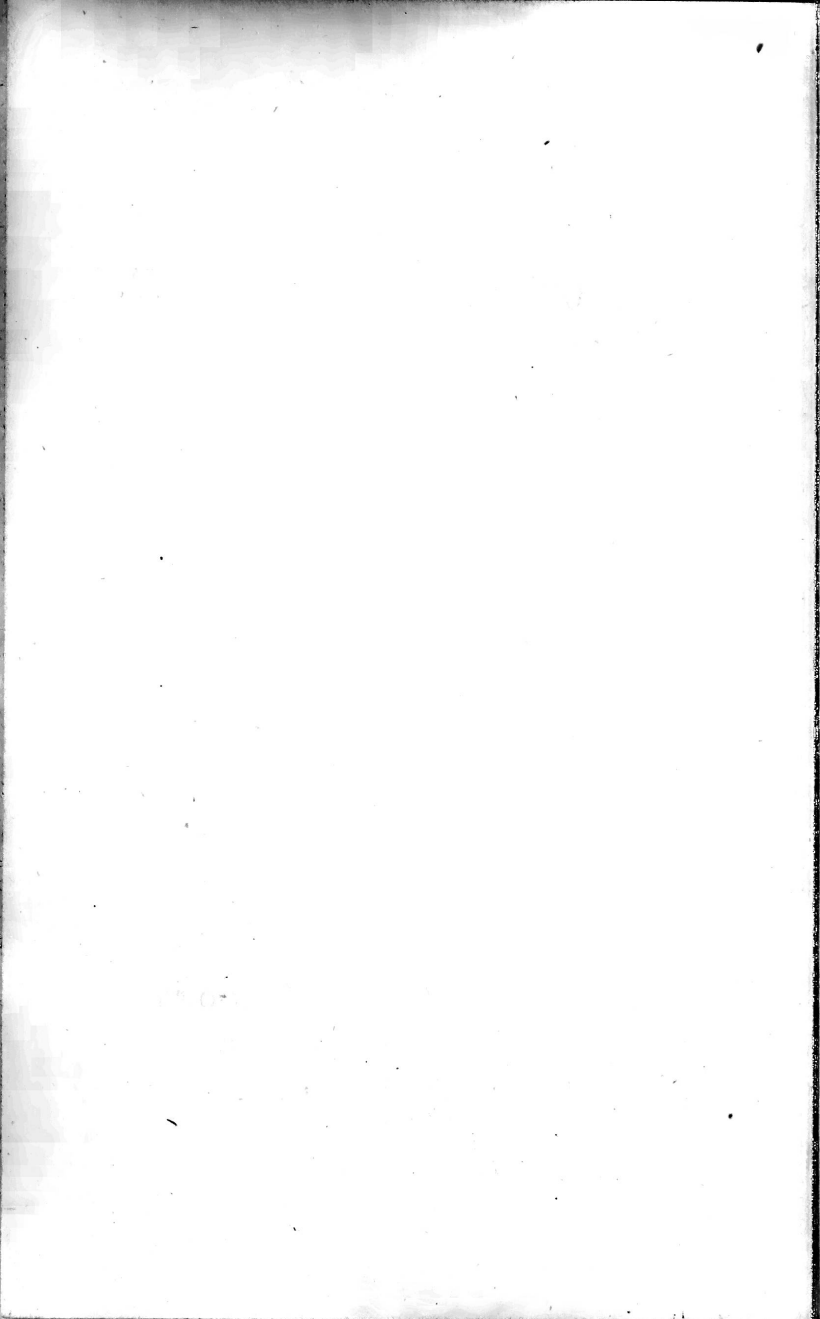
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WISE men, in modern times, are striving earnestly and zealously to, as far as possible, free religion from the cramping and deadening effect of creeds and formularies, in order that it may be able to expand with the expanding thought of the day. Creeds are like iron moulds, into which thought is poured; they may be suitable enough to the day in which they are framed; they may be fit enough to enshrine the phase of thought which designed them; but they are fatally unsuitable and unfit for the days long afterwards, and for the thought of the centuries which succeed. "No man putteth new wine into old bottles, else the new wine doth burst the bottles, and the wine is spilled, and the bottles will be marred; but new wine must be put into new bottles." The new wine of nineteenth century thought is being poured into the old bottles of fourth century creeds and sixteenth century formulas, and the strong new wine bursts the bottles, while the weak new wine that cannot burst them ferments into vinegar in them, and often becomes harmful and poisonous. Let the new wine be poured into new bottles; let the new thought mould its own expression; and then the old bottles will be preserved unbroken as curious specimens of antiquity, instead of being smashed to pieces because they get in the way of the world. Nothing is more to be deprecated in a new and living movement

than the formulating into creeds of the thoughts that inspire it, and the imposition of those creeds on those who join it. The very utmost that can be done to give coherency to a large movement is to put forward a declaration of a few cardinal doctrines that do not interfere with full liberty of divergent thought. Thus, Rationalists might take as the declaration of their central thought, that "reason is supreme," but they would be destroying the future of Rationalism if they formulated into a creed any of the conclusions to which their own reason has led them at the present time, for by so doing they would be stereotyping nineteenth century thought for the restraint of twentieth century thought, which will be larger, fuller, more instructed than their own. Free Thinkers may declare as their symbol the Right to Think, and the Right to express thought, but should never claim the declaration by others of any special form of Free Thought, before acknowledging them as Free Thinkers. Bodies of men who join together in a society for a definite purpose may fairly formulate a creed to be assented to by those who join them, but they must ever remember that such creed will lose its force in the time to come, and that while it adds strength and point to their movement now, it also limits its useful duration, if it is to be maintained as unalterable, for as circumstances change different needs will arise, and a fresh expression of the means to meet those needs will become necessary. A wise society, in forming a creed, will leave in the hands of its members full power to revise it, to amend it, to alter it, so that the living thought within the society may ever have free scope. A creed must be the expression of *living thought*, and be moulded by it, and not the skeleton of dead thought, moulding the intellect of its heirs. The strength of a society lies in the diversity, and not in the uniformity, of the thought of its members, for progress can only be made through heretical thought,

i.e., thought that is at variance with prevailing thought. All Truth is new at some time or other, and the fullest encouragement should therefore be given to free and fearless expression, since by such expression only is the promulgation of new truths possible. An age of advancement is always an age of heresy; for advancement comes from questioning, and questioning springs from doubt, and hence progress and heresy walk ever hand-in-hand, while an age of faith is also an age of stagnation.

Every argument that can be brought against a stereotyped creed for adults, tells with tenfold force against a stereotyped catechism for children. If it is evil to try and mould the thought of those whose maturity ought to be able to protect them against pressure from without, it is certainly far more evil to mould the thought of those whose still unset reason is ductile in the trainer's hand. A catechism is a sort of strait-waistcoat put upon children, preventing all liberty of action, and while the child's brain ought to be cultured and developed, it ought never to be trained to run in one special groove of thought. Education should teach children *how* to think, but should never tell them *what* to think. It should sharpen and polish the instruments of thought, but should not fix them into a machine made to cut out one special shape of thought. It should send the young out into the world keen-judging, clear-eyed, thoughtful, eager, inquiring, but should not send them out with answers cut-and-dried to every question, with opinions ready made for them, and dogmas nailed into their brains. Most churches have provided catechism-sawdust for the nourishment of the lambs of their flock; Roman Catholics, Church of Englanders, Presbyterians, they have all their juvenile moulds. The Church of England catechism is, perhaps, the least injurious of all, because the Church of England is the result of a compromise, and has the most offensive

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parts of its dogmas cut out of the public formularies. It wears some slight apron of fig-leaves in deference to the effect produced by the eating of the tree of knowledge. But still, the Church of England catechism is bad enough, training the child to believe the most impossible things before he is old enough to test their impossibility. To the age which believes in Jack-and-the-bean-stalk, and the adventures of Cinderella, all things are possible; whether it be Jonah in the whale's belly, or Tom Thumb in the stomach of the red cow, all is gladly swallowed with implicit faith: the children grow out of Tom Thumb, in the course of nature, but they are not allowed to grow out of Jonah.

When the baby is brought to the font to make divers promises, of the making of which he is profoundly unconscious—however noisily he may at times convey his utter disgust at the whole proceeding—the godfathers and godmothers are directed to see that the child is “brought to the bishop to be confirmed by him, so soon as he can say the creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments, in the vulgar tongue, and be further instructed in the Church Catechism set forth for that purpose.” It is scarcely necessary to say that these words—being in the Prayer-Book—are not meant to be taken literally, and that the bishop would be much astonished if all the small children in the Sunday School who can glibly repeat the required lesson, were to be brought up to him for confirmation. As a matter of fact the large majority of godfathers and godmothers do not trouble themselves about seeing their godchildren brought to confirmation at all, and the children are sent up when they are about fifteen, at which period most of them who are above the Sunday School going grade, are rapidly “crammed” with the Catechism, which they as rapidly forget when the day of confirmation is over.

The Church of England Catechism.

The Christian name of the child being given in answer to the first question of the Catechism, the second enquiry proceeds: "Who gave you this name?" The child is taught to answer—"My godfathers and godmothers in my baptism; wherein I was made a member of Christ, the child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven." Thus, the first lesson imprinted on the child's memory is one of the most objectionable of the dogmas of the Church, that of baptismal regeneration. In baptism he is "made" something; then he becomes something which he was not before; according to the baptismal office, he is given in baptism "that thing which by nature he cannot have," and being under the wrath of God, he is delivered from that curse, and is received for God's "own child by adoption;" he is also "incorporated" into the "holy Church," and thus becomes "a member of Christ," being made a part of the body of which Christ is the head; this being done, he is, of course, an "inheritor of the kingdom of heaven" through the "adoption."

Thus the child is taught that, by nature, he is bad and accursed by God; that so bad was he as an infant, that his parents were obliged to wash away his sins before God would love him. If he asks what harm he had done that he should need cleansing, he will be told that he inherits Adam's sin; if he asks why he should be accursed for being born, and why, born into God's world at God's will, he should not by nature be God's child, he will be told that God is angry with the world, and that everyone has a bad nature when they are born; thus he learns his first lesson of the unreality of religion; he is cursed for Adam's sin, which he had no share in, and forgiven for his parent's good deed, which he did not help in. The whole thing is to him a play acted in his infancy in which he was a puppet, in which God was angry with him for what he had not done, and pleased with

him for what he did not say, and he consequently feels that he has neither part nor lot in the whole affair, and that the business is none of his ; if he be timid and superstitious, he will hand over his religion to others, and trust to the priest to finish for him what Adam and his parents began, shifting on to them all a responsibility that he feels does not in reality belong to him.

The unreality deepens in the next answer which is put into his mouth—"What did your godfathers and godmothers then for you?" "They did promise and vow three things in my name: First, that I should renounce the devil and all his works, the pomps and vanities of this wicked world, and all the sinful lusts of the flesh. Secondly, that I should believe all the articles of the Christian Faith. And thirdly, that I should keep God's holy will and commandments, and walk in the same all the days of my life." Turning to the Baptismal Service again, we find that the godparents are asked, "Dost thou, *in the name of this child*, renounce," etc., and they answer severally, "I renounce them all," "All this I steadfastly believe;" and, asked if they will keep God's holy will, they still answer for the child, "I will." What binding force can such promises as these have upon the conscience of anyone when he grows up? The promises were made without his consent; why should he keep them? The belief was vowed before he had examined it; why should he profess it? No promise made in another's name can be binding on him who has given no authority for such use of his name, and the unconscious baby, innocent of all knowledge of what is being done, can never, in justice, be held liable for breaking a contract in the making of which he had no share. Bentham rightly and justly protests against "the implied—the necessarily implied—assumption, that it is in the power of any person—not only with the consent of the father or other guardian, but with-

out any such consent—to fasten upon a child at its birth, and long before it is itself even capable of giving consent to anything, with the concurrence of two other persons, alike self-appointed, load it with a set of obligations—obligations of a most terrific and appalling character—obligations of the nature of *oaths*, of which just so much and no more is rendered visible as is sufficient to render them terrific—obligations to which neither in quantity nor in quality are any limits attempted to be or capable of being assigned.”

This obligation, laid upon the child in its unconsciousness, places it in a far worse position, should it hereafter reject the Christian religion, than if such an undertaking had not been entered into on its behalf. It becomes an “apostate,” and is considered to have disgracefully broken its faith; it lies under legal disabilities which it would not otherwise incur, for heavy statutes are levelled against those who, after having “professed the Christian religion,” write or speak against it. Thus in early infancy a chain is forged round the child’s neck which fetters him throughout life, and the unconsciousness of the baby is taken advantage of to lay him under terrible penalties. In English law a minor is protected because of his youth; surely we need an ecclesiastical minority, before the expiration of which no spiritual contracts entered into should be enforceable. From the religious point of view, apostacy is far more fatal than simple non-Christianity. Keble writes :

“Vain thought, that shall not be at all !
Refuse me, or obey,
Our ears have heard the Almighty’s call,
We cannot be as they.”

Is it fair not to ask the child’s assent before making his case worse than that of the heathen should he hereafter reject the faith which his sponsors promise he shall believe ?

Besides, how absurd is this promising for another ; a child is taught not to break *his* baptismal vow, when he has made no such vow at all ; how can the god-parents ensure that the child shall renounce the devil and believe in Christianity, and obey God ? It is foolish enough to make a promise of that kind for oneself, when changing circumstances may force us into breaking it, but it is sheer madness to make such a promise on behalf of somebody else. The promise to "believe all the Articles of the Christian Faith," cannot take effect until the judgment has grown ripe enough to test, to accept, or to reject, and who then can say for his brother, "he shall believe." Belief is not a matter of will, it is a matter of evidence ; if evidence enough supports an assertion, we *must* believe it, while if the evidence be insufficient we *must* doubt it. Belief is neither a virtue nor a vice ; it is simply the consequence of sufficient evidence. Theological belief is demanded on insufficient evidence ; such belief is called, theologically, "faith," but in ordinary matters it would be termed "credulity." First amongst the renouncings comes "the devil and all his works." Says Bentham:—"The *Devil*, who or what is *he*, and how is it that he is *renounced*? The *works* of the Devil, what are *they*, and how is it that they are renounced? Applied to the Devil, who or whatever he is—applied to the Devil's works, whatever they are—what sort of an operation is *renouncement* or *renunciation*?"

Pertinent questions, surely, and none of them answerable. A Court of Law lately sat upon the Devil, and could not find him ; how is the Christian to explain to the child whom it is he has renounced in his infancy ? "And in the first place, the Devil himself—of whom so decided and familiar a mention, as of one whom everybody knows, is made.—Where lives he ? Who is he ? What is he ? The child itself, did it ever see him ? By any one, to whom for the purpose of the inquiry the child

has access, was he ever seen? The child, has it ever happened to it to have any dealings with him? Is it in any such danger as that of having, at any time, to his knowledge, any sort of dealings with him? If not, then to what purpose is this *renouncement*? and, once more, what is it that is meant by it?"

But supposing there were a devil, and supposing he had works, how could the child renounce him? The devil is not in the child's possession that he might give him up as if he were an injurious toy. In days gone by the phrase had a definite meaning; people were supposed to be able to hold commerce with the devil, to commune with familiar spirits, and summon imps to do their bidding; to "renounce the devil and all his works" was then a promise to have nothing to do with witchcraft, sorcery, or magic; to regard the devil as an enemy, and to take no advantage by his help. All these beliefs have long since passed away into "The Old Curiosity Shop" of Ecclesiastical Rubbish, but children are still taught to repeat the old phrases, to rattle the dry bones which life has left so long. The "pomps of this wicked world" might be renounced by Christians if they wanted to do so, but they shew a strange obliviousness of their baptismal vow. A reception at Court is as good an instance of the renunciation of the vain pomp and glory of this wicked world as we could wish to see, and when we remember that the children who are taught the Catechism in their childhood are taught to aim at winning these pomps in their youth and maturity, we learn to appreciate the fact that spiritual things can only be spiritually discerned. Would it not be well if the Church would publish an "Explanation of the Catechism," so that the children may know what they have renounced?

"Dost thou not think that thou art bound to believe, and to do as they have promised for thee?"
"Yes, verily; and by God's help so I will. And I

heartily thank our heavenly Father, that he hath called me to this state of salvation, through Jesus Christ our Saviour. And I pray unto God to give me his grace, that I may continue in the same unto my life's end." "Bound to believe . . . as they have promised for thee!" In the name of common sense, why? What a marvellous claim for any set of people to put forward, that they have the right to promise what other people shall believe. And the child is taught to answer to this preposterous question, "Yes, verily." The Church does wisely in training children to answer thus before they begin to think, as they would certainly never admit so palpably unjust a claim as that they were bound to believe or to do anything simply because some other persons said that they should. The hearty thanks due to God "that he hath called me to this state of salvation," seem somewhat premature, as well as unnecessary. God, having made the child, is bound to put him in some "state" where existence will not involve a curse to him; the "salvation" is very doubtful, being dependent on a variety of things in addition to baptism. Besides, it is doubtful whether it is an advantage to be in a "state of salvation," unless you get finally saved, some Christian authors appearing to think that damnation is the heavier if it is incurred after being put in the state of salvation, so that, on the whole, it would probably be less dangerous to be a heathen. The child is then required to "rehearse the articles of his belief," and is taught to recite "the Apostles' Creed," *i.e.*, a creed with which the apostles had nothing in the world to do. The act of belief ought surely to be an intelligent one, and anyone who professes to believe a thing ought to have some idea of what the thing is. What idea can a child have of conception by the Holy Ghost and being born of the Virgin Mary, in both which recondite mysteries he avows his belief? Having recited this, to him (as to everyone else), unintelligible

creed, he is asked, "What dost thou chiefly learn in these articles of thy belief!" a most necessary question, since they can have conveyed no idea at all to his little mind. He answers: "First, I learn to believe in God the Father, who hath made me and all the world. Secondly, in God the Son, who hath redeemed me and all mankind. Thirdly, in God the Holy Ghost, who sanctifieth me and all the elect people of God." Curiously, the last two paragraphs have no parallels in the creed itself; there is no word there that the Son is God, nor that he redeemed the child, nor that he redeemed all mankind; neither is it said that the Holy Ghost is God, nor that he sanctifies anyone at all. How is the child to believe that God the Son redeemed *all mankind*, when he is taught that only by baptism has he himself been brought into "this state of salvation?" if all are redeemed, why should he specially thank God that he himself is called and saved? if all are redeemed, what is the meaning of the phrase that "all the elect people of God" are sanctified by the Holy Ghost? Surely all who are redeemed must also be sanctified, and should not the two passages touch only the same people? Either the Holy Ghost should sanctify all mankind, or Christ should redeem only the elect people of God. A redeemed, but unsanctified, person would cause confusion as to his proper place when he arrived in the realms above; St Peter would not know where to send him to. Bentham caustically remarks: "Here, then, in this word, we have the name of a sort of *process*, which the child is made to say is going on within him; going on within him at all times—going on within him at the very instant he is giving this account of it. This process, then, what is it? Of what feelings is it productive? By what marks and symptoms is he to know whether it really is or is not going on within him, as he is forced to say it is? How does he feel, now that the Holy Ghost is *sancti-*

fyng him? How is it that he would feel, if no such operation were going on within him? Too often does it happen to him in some shape or other, to commit *sin*; or something which he is told and required to believe is *sin*: an event which cannot fail to be frequently, not to say continually, taking place, if that be true, which in the Liturgy we are all made so decidedly to confess and assert,—viz., that we are all—all of us without exception—so many ‘*miserable sinners.*’ In the *schoolroom*, doing what by this Catechism he is forced to do, saying what he is forced to say, the child thus declares himself, notwithstanding, a *sanctified* person. From thence going to church, he confesses himself to be no better than ‘*a miserable sinner.*’ If he is not always this miserable sinner, then why is he always forced to say he is? If he is always this same miserable sinner, then this sanctification, be it what it may, which the Holy Ghost was at the pains of bestowing upon him, what is he the better for it?” Besides, how can the child be taught to believe in one God if he finds three different gods all doing different things for him? As clear a distinction as possible is here made between the redeeming work of God the Son and the sanctifying work of God the Holy Ghost, and if the child tries to realise in any fashion that which he is taught to say he believes, he must inevitably become a Tri-theist and believe in the creator, the redeemer, the sanctifier, as three different gods. The creed being settled, the child is reminded: “You said that your godfathers and godmothers did promise for you that you should keep God’s commandments. Tell me how many there be? *Ans.* Ten. *Ques.* Which be they? *Ans.* The same which God spake in the twentieth chapter of Exodus, saying, I am the Lord thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have none other gods but me.” But God has not brought the child, nor

the child's ancestors, out of the land of Egypt, nor out of the house of bondage: therefore the first commandment, which is made dependent on such out-bringing, is not spoken to the child. The argument runs: "Seeing that I have done so much for thee, thou shalt have no other God instead of me." The second commandment is rejected by general consent, and it is almost certain that the child will be taught that God has commanded that no likeness of anything shall be made in a room with pictures on the walls. Christians conveniently gloss over the fact that this commandment forbids all sculpture, all painting, all moulding, all engraving; they plead that it only means that nothing shall be made for purposes of worship, although the distinct words are: "*Thou shalt not make any likeness of anything.*" In order to thoroughly understand the state of the child's mind who has learned that "I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, and visit the sins of the fathers upon the children," when he comes to read other parts of the Bible, it will be well to put side by side with this declaration, Ezekiel xviii. 19, 20: "Yet say ye, why? doth not the son bear the iniquity of the father? When the son hath done that which is lawful and right, and hath kept all my statutes, and hath done them, he shall surely live. The soul that sinneth it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father." The fourth commandment is disregarded on all sides; from the prince who has his fish on the Sunday from the fishmonger down to the costermonger who sells cockles in the street, all nominal Christians forget and disobey this command; they keep their servants at work, although they ought to "do no manner of work," and drive in carriage, cab, and omnibus as though God had not said that the cattle also should be idle on the Sabbath day. Although the New Testament is, on this point, in direct conflict with the Old,—Paul commanding the Colossians not

to trouble themselves about Sabbaths, yet Christians read and teach this commandment, while in their lives they carry out the injunction of Paul. To complete the demoralising effect of this fourth commandment on the child, he is taught that "in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is," while, in his day-school, he is instructed in exactly the opposite sense, and is told of the long and countless ages of evolution through which the world passed, and the marvellous creatures that inhabited it before the coming of man. The fifth commandment is also evil in its effect on the child's mind from that same fault of unreality which runs throughout the teaching of the Established Church. "Honour thy father and thy mother *that thy days may be long in the land.*" He will know perfectly well that good children die as well as bad, and that, therefore, there is no truth in the promise he recites. The rest of the commandments enjoin simple moral duties, and would be useful if taught without the preceding ones; as it is, the unreality of the first five injures the force of the later ones, and the good and bad, being mixed up together, are not likely to be carefully distinguished, and thus they lose all compelling moral power.

The commandments recited, the child is asked—"What dost thou chiefly learn by these commandments?" and he answers that—"I learn two things: my duty towards God, and my duty towards my neighbour." We would urge here that man's duty to man should be the point most pressed upon the young. Supposing that any "duty to God" were possible—a question outside the present subject—it is clear that the duty to man is the nearest, the most obvious, the easiest to understand, and therefore the first to be inculcated. Surely, it is only by discharge of the immediate and the plain duty that any discharge becomes possible of one less near and less

plain. Besides, the duty to God taught in the Catechism is of so wide and engrossing a nature that to discharge it fully would take up the whole time and thoughts. For in answer to the question, "What is thy duty towards God?" the child says:—"My duty towards God is to believe in him, to fear him, and to love him with all my heart, with all my mind, with all my soul, and with all my strength; to worship him, to give him thanks, to put my whole trust in him, to call upon him, to honour his holy name and his word, and to serve him truly all the days of my life." First, "to believe in him;" but how can the child believe in him until evidence be offered^d of his existence? But to examine such evidence is beyond the still-weak intellectual powers of the child, and therefore belief in God is beyond him, for belief based on authority is utterly valueless. Besides, it can never be a "duty" to believe; if the evidence of a fact be convincing, belief in that fact naturally follows, and non-belief would be very stupid; but the word "duty" is out of place in connection with belief. "To fear him:" that the child will naturally do, after learning that God was angry with him for being born, and that another God, Jesus Christ, was obliged to die to save him from the angry God. "To love him;" not so easy, under the circumstances, nor is love compatible with fear; "perfect love casteth out fear . . . he that feareth is not made perfect in love." "With all my heart, with all my mind, with all my soul, and with all my strength." Four different things the child is to love God with: What does each mean? How is heart to be distinguished from mind, soul, and strength? In human love, love of the heart might, perhaps, be distinguished from love of the mind, if by love of the heart alone a purely physical passion were intended; but this cannot explain any sort of love to God, to whom such love would be clearly impossible. Once more, we say

that the Church of England should publish an explanation of the Catechism, so that we may know what we ought to do and believe for our soul's health. Bentham urges that to put the "whole trust" in God would prevent the child from putting "any part of his trust" in second causes, and that disregard of these would not be compatible with personal safety and with the preservation of health and life; and that further, as all these services are "unprofitable" to God, they might "with more profit be directed to the service of those weak creatures, whose need of all the service that can be rendered to them is at all times so urgent and so abundant." The duty to God being thus acknowledged, there follows the duty to the neighbour, for which there seems no room when the love, trust, and service due to God have been fully rendered "Ques. What is thy duty toward thy neighbour? Ans. My duty towards my neighbour is to love him as myself, and to do to all men as I would they should do unto me. To love, honour, and succour my father and mother. To honour and obey the king, and all that are put in authority under him. To submit myself to all my governors, teachers, spiritual pastors and masters. To order myself lowly and reverently to all my betters. To hurt nobody by word or deed. To be true and just in all my dealings. To bear no malice nor hatred in my heart. To keep my hands from picking and stealing, and my tongue from evil-speaking, lying, and slandering. To keep my body in temperance, soberness, and chastity. Not to covet nor desire other men's goods; but to learn and labour truly to get mine own living, and to do my duty in that state of life unto which it shall please God to call me." The first phase reproduces the morality which is as old as successful social life. "What word will serve as a rule for the whole life?" asked one of Confucius. "Is not reciprocity such a word?" answered the sage. "What thou dost not

desire done to thyself, do not to others. When you are labouring for others, let it be with the same zeal as if for yourself." The second phrase is true and right; the next is often foolish and impossible. Who could honour such a king as George IV. ? while to "obey" James II. would have been the destruction of England. Honour and obedience to constituted authorities is a duty only when those authorities discharge the duties that they are placed in power to execute; the moment they fail in doing this, to honour and to obey them is to become partners in their treason to the nation. The doctrine of divine right was believed in when the Catechism was written, and then the voice of the king was a divine voice, and to resist him was to resist God. The two following phrases breathe the same cringing spirit, as though the main duty towards one's neighbour were to submit to him. Reverence to any one better than one's-self is an instinct, but "my betters" is simply a cant expression for those higher in the social scale, and those have no right to any lowlier ordering than the simple respect and courtesy that every man should show towards every other. This kind of teaching saps a child's mental strength and self-respect, and is fatal to his manliness of character if it makes any impression upon him. The remainder of the answer is thoroughly good and wholesome, save the last few words about "that state of life unto which it shall please God to call me." A child should be taught that his "state of life" depends upon his own exertions, and not upon any "calling" of God, and that if the state be unsatisfactory, it is his duty to set diligently to work to mend it; not to be content with it when bad, not to throw on God the responsibility of having placed him there, but so to labour with all hearty diligence as to make it worthy of himself, honourable, respectable, and comfortable. At this point the child is informed:—"Thou art not able to do these things of thyself, nor to walk in the

commandments of God, and to serve him, without his special grace ; which thou must learn at all times to call for by diligent prayer." But if the child cannot do these things" without God's "special grace," then the responsibility of his not doing them must of necessity fall upon God ; for the child cannot pray unless God gives him grace ; and without prayer he can't get special grace, and without special grace he can't "do these things;" so that clearly the child is helpless until God sends him his grace, and therefore the whole responsibility lies upon God alone, and he can never blame the child for not doing that which he himself has prevented him from beginning. Diligent prayer for special grace being thus wanted, the child is taught to recite the Lord's Prayer, in which grace is not mentioned at all, and he is then asked—"What desirest thou of God in this prayer?" "I desire my Lord God, our Heavenly Father, who is the giver of all goodness, to send his grace to me and to all people ; that we may worship him, serve him, and obey him, as we ought to do." We rub our eyes ; not one word of all this is discoverable in the Lord's prayer! "Send his grace to me and to all people" ? not a syllable conveying any such meaning : "that we may worship him, serve him, and obey him" ? not the shadow of such a request. Is it supposed to train a child in the habit of truthfulness to make him recite as a religious lesson what is utterly and thoroughly untrue ? "And I pray unto God that he will send us all things that be needful both for our souls and bodies, and that he will be merciful unto us, and forgive us our sins." "All things that be needful both for our souls and bodies" is, we presume, summed up in "our daily bread." Simple people would scarcely imagine that "daily bread" was all they wanted both for their souls and bodies ; perhaps the souls want nothing, not being discoverable by any real needs which they express. "And that it will please him to save and defend us in all dangers, ghostly

and bodily ; and that he will keep us from all sin and wickedness, and from our ghostly enemy, and from everlasting death." Here, again, nothing in the prayer can be translated into these phrases ; there is nothing about saving and defending from all dangers, ghostly and bodily, nor a syllable as to defence from our ghostly enemy, by whom a child will probably understand a ghost in a white sheet, and will go to bed in terror after saying the Catechism which thus recognises ghosts—nor from everlasting death. The prayer is of the simplest, but the translation of it of the hardest. "And this I trust he will do of his mercy and goodness, through our Lord Jesus Christ; And therefore I say Amen, so be it." Why should the child trust God's mercy and goodness to protect him? There would be no dangers, ghostly and bodily, no ghostly enemy, and no everlasting death, unless God had invented them all, and the person who places us in the midst of dangers is scarcely the one to whom to turn for deliverance from them. Mercy and goodness would not have surrounded us with such dangers; mercy and goodness would not have encompassed us with such foes; mercy and goodness would have created beings whose glad lives would have been one long hymn of praise to the creator, and would have ever blessed him that he had called them into existence.

The child is now to be led further into the Christian mysteries, and is to be instructed in the doctrine of the sacraments, curious double-natured things of which we have to believe in what we don't see, and see that which we are not to believe in. "How many sacraments hath Christ ordained in his Church?" "Two only, as generally necessary to salvation, that is to say, Baptism and the Supper of the Lord." "Generally necessary"; the word "generally" is explained by commentators as "universally," so that the phrase should run, "universally necessary to sal-

vation." The theory of the Church being that all are by nature the children of wrath, and that "*none* are regenerate," except they be born of water and of the Holy Ghost, it follows that baptism is universally necessary to salvation; and since Jesus has said "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, ye have no life in you" (John vi. 53), it equally follows that the Lord's Supper is universally necessary to salvation. Seeing that the vast majority of mankind are not baptized Christians at all, and that of baptized Christians the majority never eat the Lord's Supper, the heirs of salvation will be extremely limited in number, and will not be inconveniently crowded in the many mansions above. "What meanest thou by this word *sacrament*? I mean an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace given unto us, ordained by Christ himself, as a means whereby we receive the same, and as a pledge to assure us thereof." If this be a true definition of a sacrament, no such thing as a sacrament can fairly be said to be in existence. What is the inward and spiritual grace given unto the baby in baptism? If it be given, it must be seen in its effects, or else it is a gift of nothing at all. A baby after baptism is exactly the same as it was before; cries as much, kicks as much, fidgets as much; clearly it has received no inward and spiritual sanctifying grace; it behaves as well or as badly as any unbaptized baby, and is neither worse nor better than its contemporaries. Manifestly the inward grace is wanting, and therefore no true sacrament is here, for a sacrament must have the grace as well as the sign. The same thing may be said of the Lord's Supper; people do not seem any the better for it after its reception; a hungry man is satisfied after his supper, and so shows that he has really received something, but the spirit suffers as much from the hunger of envy and the thirst of bad temper after the Lord's

Supper as it did before. But why should the grace be "inward," and why is the soul thought of as *inside* the body, instead of all through and over it? There are few convenient hollows inside where it can dwell, but people speak as though man were an empty box, and the soul might live in it. The sacrament is "a means whereby we receive the same, and a pledge to assure us thereof." God's grace then can be conveyed in the vehicles of water, bread, and wine; it must surely, then, be something material, else how can material things transmit it? And God becomes dependent on man to decide for him on whom the grace shall be bestowed. Two infants are born into the world; one of them is brought to church and is baptized; God may give that child his grace: the other is left without baptism; it is a child of wrath, and God may not bless it. Thus is God governed by the neglect of a poor, and very likely drunken, nurse, and the recipients of his grace are chosen for him at the caprice or carelessness of men. Strange, too, that Christians who received God's grace need "a pledge to assure" them that they have really got it; how curious that the recipient should not know that so precious a gift has been bestowed upon him until he has also been given a little bit of bread and a tiny sip of wine. It is as though a queen's messenger put into one's hand a hundred £1000 notes, and then said solemnly: "Here is a farthing as a pledge to assure you that you have really received the notes." Would not the notes themselves be the best assurance that we had received them, and would not the grace of God consciously possessed be its own best proof that God had given it to us? "How many parts are there in a sacrament? Two; the outward visible sign, and the inward spiritual grace." This is simply a repetition of the previous question and answer, and is entirely unnecessary. "What is the outward visible sign, or form, in baptism? Water; wherein

the person is baptized *in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.*" This answer raises the interesting question as to whether English Christians—save the Baptists—are really baptized. They are not baptized "in," but only "with" water. The rubric directs that the minister "shall *dip it in the water discreetly and warily,*" and that only where "the child is weak it shall suffice to pour water upon it." It appears possible that the salvation of nearly all the English people is in peril, since their baptism is imperfect. The formula of baptism reminds us of a curious difference in the baptism of the apostles from the baptism in the triune name of God; although Jesus had, according to Matthew, solemnly commanded them to baptize with this formula, we find, from the Acts, that they utterly disregarded his injunction, and baptized "in the name of Jesus Christ," instead of in the name of "Father, Son, and Holy Ghost." (See Acts ii. 38, viii. 16, x. 48, xix. 5, etc.) The obvious conclusion to be drawn from this is, that if the Acts be historical, Jesus never gave the command put into his mouth in Matthew, but that it was inserted later when such a formula became usual in the Church. "What is the inward and spiritual grace? A death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness; for being by nature born in sin, and the children of wrath, we are hereby made the children of grace." What? a baby die unto sin? how can it, when it is unconscious of sin, and therefore cannot sin? "A new birth unto righteousness?" but it is only just born, surely there can be no need that it should be born over again so soon? And if it be true that this is the inward grace given, would it not be well—as did many in the early Church—to put off the ceremony of baptism until the last moment, so that the dying man, being baptized, may die to all the sins he has committed during life, and be born again into spiritual babyhood, fit to go straight into

heaven? It seems a needless cruelty to baptize infants, and so deprive them of the chance of getting rid of all their life sins in a lump later on. This is not the only objection to baptism. Bentham powerfully urges what has often been pressed:—

“Note well the sort of story that is here told. The Almighty God,—maker of all things, visible and ‘invisible,’—‘of heaven and earth, and all that therein is,’—makes, amongst other things, a child: and no sooner has he made it, than he is ‘*wrath*’ with it for being made. He determines accordingly to consign it to a state of endless torture. Meantime comes somebody,—and pronouncing certain words, applies the child to a quantity of water, or a quantity of water to the child. Moved by these words, the all-wise Being changes his design; and, though he is not so far appeased as to give the child its pardon, vouchsafes to it a *chance*,—no one can say *what* chance,—of ultimate escape. And this is what the child gets by being ‘made’—and we see in what way made—‘*a child of grace.*’”

“What is required of persons to be baptised? Repentance, whereby they forsake sin; and Faith, whereby they steadfastly believe the promises of God made to them in that Sacrament. Why then are infants baptised when by reason of their tender age they cannot perform them? [Why, indeed!] Because they promise them both by their sureties, which promise, when they come to age, themselves are bound to perform.” Surely it would be better if these things are “required” before baptism, to put off baptism until repentance and faith become possible, instead of going through it like a play, where people act their parts and represent somebody else. For suppose the child for whom repentance and faith are promised does not, when he comes to full age, either repent of his sins or believe God’s promises, what becomes of the inward and spiritual grace? It must

either have been given, or not have been given; if the former, the unrepentant and unbelieving person has got it on the faith of his sureties' promises for him; if the latter, God has not given the grace promised in Holy Baptism, and his promises are therefore unreliable in all cases.

“Why was the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper ordained? For the continual remembrance of the sacrifice of the death of Christ, and of the benefits which we receive thereby.” What very bad memories Christians must have! God has come down from heaven on purpose to die for them, and they cannot remember it without eating and drinking in memory of it. The child is then taught that the outward part in the Lord's Supper is bread and wine, and that the inward part is “The Body and Blood of Christ, which are verily and indeed taken and received by the faithful in the Lord's Supper,” the body and blood nourishing the soul, as the bread and wine do the body. If the body and blood convey as infinitesimal an amount of nourishment to the soul as the small portions of bread and wine do to the body, the soul must suffer much from spiritual hunger. But how do they nourish the soul? The body and blood must be somehow in the bread and wine, and how is it managed that one part shall nourish the soul while the rest goes to the body? “verily and indeed taken and received.” From the eager protestation one would imagine that there must be some doubt about it, and that there might be some question as to whether the invisible and intangible thing were really and truly taken. It needs but little insight to see how woefully confusing it must be to an intelligent child to teach him that bread and wine are only bread and wine one minute and the next are Christ's body and blood as well, although none of his senses can distinguish the smallest change in them. Such instruction will, if it has any effect on his mind, incline him to take every

assertion on trust, without, and even contrary to, reason and experiment; it lays the basis of all superstition, by teaching belief in what is not susceptible of proof.

“What is required of them who come to the Lord’s supper? To examine themselves, whether they repent them truly of their former sins, steadfastly purposing to lead a new life; have a lively faith in God’s mercy through Christ, with a thankful remembrance of his death; and be in charity with all men.” It is the custom in many churches now to have weekly, and in some to have daily, communion; can the communicants who attend these steadfastly purpose to lead a new life every time? and how many “former sins” are they as continually repenting of? Here we find the overstrained piety which throughout disfigures the Prayer Book; people are moaning about their sins, and crying over their falls, and resolving to mend their ways, and vowing they will lead new lives, and the next time one sees them they are once more proclaiming themselves to be as miserable sinners as ever. How weary the Holy Ghost must get of sanctifying them.

Such is the Catechism that “The curate of every parish shall diligently upon Sundays and Holy Days, after the second lesson at evening prayer, openly in the Church” teach to the children sent to him, and which “all fathers, mothers, masters, and dames shall cause their children, servants, and apprentices (which have not learned their Catechism) to come to the Church at the time appointed,” in order to learn; such is the nourishment provided by the Church for her lambs; such is the teaching she offers to the rising generation. Thus, before they are able to think, she moulds the thinking-machine; thus, before they are able to judge, she biasses the judgment; thus, from children puzzled and bewildered she hopes to make men and women supple to her teaching, and

out of the Catechism she winds round the children's brains, she forges the chain of creeds which fetters the intellect of the full-grown members of her communion.

