





here. On the other hand, the attenuated, anthropocentric notion of a Confession held by the Congregationalists, ancient and modern, with its over-emphasis on the human origin of the Confession to the detriment of its divine content, is in this respect sectarian and not Reformed.

(4) The Reformed Confession must be understood to be an expression of insight, which, though it may be in many different forms widely misunderstood and degraded, is yet granted by God to the men of the universal Christian Church. It lays weight and importance—and in this, too, it is consciously anti-sectarian—on its agreement with the Church of the first five centuries. As regards its relations with Lutheranism it is thoroughly on the defensive against an antagonist whose Christianity it never really questions. It never refuses to recognise, even in the fiercest polemic against Romanism, the presence of the Church of Christ even in the Church of Anti-Christ. In its strong and pointed attitude against Rome it has in fact joined issue with the theological and ecclesiastical tradition of the Middle Ages on a broader front than has Lutheranism. It does not call itself Zwinglian or Calvinistic, but Christian. It does not desire to serve and represent some so-called idiosyncrasy, as we are often told in Germany, not even an idiosyncrasy supposed to be the will of God. It wishes to be the voice of the "Una Sancta." Hence comes its willingness to be conciliatory, and also its rigour.

(5) But all the insight granted to the Christian Church by God into His revelation must be understood to be fundamentally "*insight hitherto bestowed.*" There is a third thing to be interposed between (1) the unchangeable Word of God, on one hand, which has its authenticity attested in the Holy Scriptures and in them alone; which was given in revelation through the Word which was in the beginning; which must be heard through the Church, and must make itself heard, and (2) human religious opinions and convictions; on the other hand. Not only does the Church possess the Scriptures and receive the Spirit, but it has and receives the truth through the Scriptures and the Spirit from generation to generation. This truth, the absolute truth of God, is nevertheless received and possessed by men, bit by bit, and progressively; but yet it is no less the truth. (3) This third thing is Dogma, according to the Reformed notion, '*doctrina vera et pura,*' the present insight into revelation which is granted by God, and is always being granted anew, ever purer and deeper, received by the Church and by serious reflection, but always holding fuller and better things yet to be received. The more we emphasise the one or the other side, the absolute giving and receiving, or the necessary progress which is always to be found where God's grace is new every morning, the more we understand the antinomy which appears at the culminating point of Reformed creed-making—the strictly matter-of-fact and fearless dogmatic bearing of the Reformed Confession and the relativism, both pious and free, with which it regards statements it has itself formulated.

(6) This leads us to the "valid until revised," which appears twice in my definition. The Reformed Confession of Faith should possess its validity, until revised, because, as a statement of the insight we have described, it acts as a standard to distinguish the character of the confessing community from that of others, and it acts also, until further notice, as a guide to give direction to its own doctrine and life. Here we come upon an important delimitation of frontiers with Lutheranism, whose Augsburg Confession must, according to the Formula of Concord, be authoritative for the correct understanding of Scripture "ad omnem posteritatem."

"Established Church, our Church,  
Wall about thee, salvation and guard,  
Is the impregnable Augsburg Confession,  
Like a bulwark encircling thee,"

sang a Lutheran poet eighty years ago. No Reformed Confession could have been so acclaimed. The Reformed Church has never been an "Established Church" in this sense. It treats its Confessions from the beginning as subject to discussion, capable of improvement, and even of being superseded. I cite one passage from the official Introduction of the Bernese Synod of 1532, which indicates the trend of many others: "But where anything may be brought before us by our pastors or any others, which leads us nearer to Christ, and in accordance with the Word of God is more conducive to universal goodwill and Christian love than the sense now set forth, that will we gladly accept, and not circumscribe the freedom of the Holy Spirit, which does not give way to the flesh, but presses forward continually to the likeness of Christ Jesus, our Lord." And in actual fact this view, recognised explicitly by Calvin,<sup>1</sup> has been endorsed by history. The Reformed dogma, as such, is in flux. It is dogma, but it is so only in its correspondence with the state of knowledge at the time. The best proof of that (besides the partly regrettable disappearance of so many excellent old Confession documents, e.g., the Scots' Confession) is the fact that the same movement of awakening of the nineteenth century, which in Lutheranism led to the reissue of the Book of Concord, had as its consequence in the orthodox Free Churches on Reformed territory the formulation of quite a number of new Confessions.

(7) The principal reason for this lack of finality in the Reformed Confessions is—they are (likewise in opposition to those of Lutheranism) no "symbolic" books,<sup>2</sup> but, so far as concerns their earthly and temporal reality, they are honestly and really "confessiones fidei." A Confession of Faith is, according to the definition which Calvin once gave,<sup>3</sup> a "conceptae intus fidei testificatio . . . e puris Scripturae fontibus

<sup>1</sup> *Against Pighius*, Corpus Ref., vol. 34 ; Op. vi, p. 250; *Instit*, iv, pp. 9, 13.

<sup>2</sup> [That is, Nominative Creeds like the Apostles' Creed.—Tr.]

<sup>3</sup> *Against Caroli*, Op. vii, p. 312.

petita": in my definition, "a *descriptive statement* of the insight into revelation given to the Church," a human and therefore fallible description. This is the judgment which the Reformed Confession, looking back, passes on the decrees of the old Church Councils, while asserting its continuity with them, and it passes the same judgment on itself. It draws a strict line between its own dignity and the incomparable superiority of the matter with which it deals. Scripture remains Scripture, unique and peerless, beyond comparison or competition. A Confession is to be understood throughout only as an emergency production, undertaken and completed for the sake of the good order and edification of the community of God upon earth. This special necessity has been imposed by our Lord Himself, but in the sphere of human freedom and fallibility, as Calvin has most instructively laid down in his "Defence of the Reformation Oath," imposed on the Genevans in 1538.<sup>1</sup> *We, here, and now*, confess *this*—most certainly in the consciousness of speaking in the name of the "Una Sancta," and also of speaking the truth, but: *we—here—now—and this*. That is the intention also of the Synods, Governments and temporal rulers, who stand sponsor to the later Confessions. These all lack, and rightly lack, the binding force of a Creed. No one of the Reformed Faith, it is to be hoped, has fallen into the belief that the Heidelberg Catechism or the Dordrecht Confession could be inspired, as that has been taught by the Book of Concord from the Lutheran side.<sup>2</sup> Here, too, the Congregationalists, with their horror of all "Church power properly so-called,"<sup>3</sup> represent so far a genuine aspect of the notion of a Reformed Confession.

## AN AMERICAN CHILD IN INDIA

BY MRS. L. W. TAYLOR

### I. Linguistic Problems

When daddy tells me what God says,  
 God talks in English just like me,  
 But when, in church, the *parluk* reads,  
 God talks Marathi as can be.

Of course, if I am very good,  
 Some day I'll go to heaven, you see,  
 And when I stand and talk to God  
 Which do you 'spose He'll talk to me?

<sup>1</sup> Preface to the Latin Catalogue of 1538. Op. v., p. 317.

<sup>2</sup> Hase, *Hutterus Redivivus*, 10, § 51.

<sup>3</sup> Savoy Declaration, 1658.