with the negative: "Remember the Sabbath day," "Honour thy father and thy mother." (In these *positives* we have one infinitival imperative, and one which *may*, it would seem, be either infinitival or ordinary. These infinitival imperatives deserve exact study.)

This view of the Commandments seems to me very helpful toward the right understanding and use of them—in teaching the Catechism, for instance, to learners. And it seems to offer a beautiful explanation of the place they are directed to hold in our Churches. For they are indissolubly connected, not with the entry, nor with the font, the typical "laver" of new birth, but with the Lord's Table—the Table at which the Lord's children, His sons and daughters, are invited to meet, to refresh themselves in their warfare and their service and their hardships. And with them on either side stand the Creed and the Lord's Prayer. So that we have the rule of *faith*, the rule of *walk*, and the *Source* whence strength for continuance in the faith and continuance in the walk must be gained.

SYDNEY THELWALL.

ART. IX.—THE MONTH.

THE Islington meeting is generally admitted to have been an important one. The attendance was very large—perhaps larger than ever; and it is probably true, as has been observed in the press, that a larger number of clergy were collected there than at any other similar gathering. The subjects selected on this occasion were of urgent interest and of cardinal importance. The Incarnation and the Atonement are, in practice, the cardinal points of Christianity, and the question of the true standard of Catholicity is a vital one in the Ritualistic controversy. The Vicar of Islington is to be congratulated upon having obtained a paper on the first of these subjects from Dr. Knowling, the Professor of the Exegesis of the New Testament in King's College, London. Dr. Knowling's influence as a learned and judicious scholar has been steadily growing, and the part he has taken in the current discussion on the Gospel narratives of the Incarnation has been of great service to the Church. He is thoroughly acquainted with the course of thought on the subject, and his combination of wide learning, impartial judgment, and deep spiritual conviction renders his treatment of the question peculiarly valuable at this juncture. The Bishop of Durham's paper on the Atonement was very weighty, and ought to assist in bringing that vital truth into a position in current

religious thought more correspondent to its prominence in the New Testament. There is far too great a tendency in current religious thought to let the truth of the Atonement be subordinated to that of the Incarnation. This tendency is connected with an inadequate appreciation of sin, and an almost Pelagian tendency to exalt the capacities of human nature. Whatever may be theoretically conceivable, the supreme necessity of the Incarnation is practically to be seen in the deep corruption of human nature and the absolute necessity of a Divine atonement for sin. That is the practical reality which holds the foremost place in the theology of the New Testament, and unless it holds a similar place in our own theology, the balance of doctrine in our hearts and minds must be dangerously disturbed.

There is doubtless a deep connection with such erroneous views in the alarming tendency in some quarters, even among clergymen, to treat the belief in the Virgin Birth of our Lord as anything less than vital to Christianity. The practical meaning of that belief to Christian minds can perhaps only be appreciated in proportion as "the fault and corruption of the nature of every man that naturally is engendered of the offspring of Adam" is duly appreciated. In proportion as that is felt, the Christian mind must feel an inexpressible recoil from any conception of our Lord which treats Him as naturally belonging to that offspring; and those who are tampering with this belief may well be warned in time that they are in danger of awakening a depth of indignant, or even outraged, feeling which will unite the vast mass of the Church in vehement revolt. But apart from this aspect of the matter, it is very difficult to understand how any persons with the intelligence of Canon Henson, or Mr. Beeby, can for a moment suppose it to be compatible with the obligations clergymen have undertaken to admit any doubt on the subject into their teaching. It must, indeed, we think, be admitted that the Bishop of Worcester, and the Higher Critics whom he shelters, are giving a very questionable example of non-natural interpretation of the formularies, in maintaining that their views on the Old Testament are compatible with a candid reply to the question of the Ordination Service: "Do you unfeignedly believe all the Canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testament?" But in the present case there can be no question of a non-natural interpretation. It is surely undeniable, either that the Gospels of St. Matthew and St. Luke distinctly assert the doctrine of the Virgin Birth as a matter of historical fact, or that the whole Catholic Church accepted and asserted the statement in the Creeds in the sense of those two Gospels. If a man rejects it, he cuts himself off from

historical Christianity. It is conceivable he may found a new religion; but the Christianity of the Church it cannot be.

A letter in the *Times* the other day gives reason for apprehension that, in reliance on one incident in the case of *Essays and Reviews*, an attempt may be made to assert before the courts the compatibility of subscription with such views as those of Mr. Beeby. Mr. Wilson was practically charged with evacuating the historical meaning of the narratives of our Lord's Birth, by ascribing to them an ideal significance, and the charge seems to have been dismissed on the ground that it concerned simply a question of the interpretation of Scripture, and that "to maintain a figurative sense of parts of Scripture is not to deny their canonicity." But however this may be, the question which is now raised is whether a truth, or rather a fact, specifically asserted in the Creeds and the Articles can legitimately be questioned by a clergyman. We earnestly trust the writer in the *Times* is mistaken in supposing that there is even a possibility of a legal decision to such an effect. But if there be the slightest chance of it, the thanks of the Church are due to the Bishop of Worcester and, we may add, to Mr. Beeby, to the one for asserting, to the other for practically acknowledging, the moral inadmissibility of the position in question. Could it be rendered legally permissible for clergy of the English Church to question in their teaching the fact of the Virgin Birth, her position as a true branch of the Catholic Church would be destroyed if she acquiesced in such a permission. A conflict would then arise between Church and State, such as would rend the existing settlement to its foundations, and in which all sections of the Church but a small minority would be united in a deep and unyielding resistance, whatever the temporal consequences it might involve. The writer of the letter to the *Times* says that "what was 'criticism' is now 'religion,' with a philosophy, a piety, an enthusiasm of its own." A religion it may be, but it is not the Christian religion; and to the question with which he concludes—"Will the Church of England drive it out?"—we can only reply that the Church of England is under a sacred obligation to "banish and drive away all erroneous and strange doctrine contrary to God's word."