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*Nov. 21. 1827*

# SERMON,

ON

# CREEDS & CONFESSIONS,

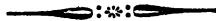
BY THE

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CHAMBERSBURG.



PREACHED DECEMBER 31, 1826.



I also will shew mine opinion.—ELIHU.  
Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.—REV. III. XI.

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## TO THE PUBLIC.

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HE who is called to preach the Gospel and defend the truth, from the sacred desk, may surely be permitted, without the charge of presumption, to exhibit the same truth, by the press.

The advocates of the no-creed system avail themselves of both. The pulpit echoes with their denunciations—their defamation of Creeds and Confessions, as of *satanic origin*; and the press groans with their pamphlets and sermons.

Shall ministers, the friends of ecclesiastical order, be silent? This would not comport well with their duty as *watchmen*. The walls of Zion must be defended. If the Church be attacked from both the pulpit and the press, from both should she be defended. This is all the apology I think it necessary to offer to a thinking and religious public, for intruding upon their attention.

I have only to add, that the severe calamity which consumed my dwelling and all my papers, prevented the publication sooner.

# S E R M O N .



## AMOS III. 3.

*Can two walk together, except they be agreed?*

THESE words contain a most important principle, which diffuses itself through all the departments of moral existence. They are in the interrogatory form, which is frequently used in Scripture, and indeed in common conversation, when we would deny most strongly. Jehovah says to these rebellious Israelites, with whom He had a most serious controversy—Know ye not, that it is contrary to the nature of things, that those who differ in sentiment, should harmoniously pursue their way together? and do you think that you and I, seeing we differ so widely, can continue in harmonious intercourse? No. Be assured I will walk contrary to you, and visit you with extirminating judgments,

As this text has been treated somewhat contemptuously, by the opponents of Creeds and Confessions, you will permit me to collate it with one or two other passages of scripture, in order to fix its meaning, and satisfy your minds that we are not mistaken in the application which we make of it to ecclesiastical fellowship. The first is in Prov. xxix. 27—*An unjust man is an abomination to the just; and he that is upright in the way is abomination to the wicked.* The other is in II. Cor. vi. 14—*Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?*

From these passages, thus collated, it is evident that the walking together, mentioned in the text, is a metaphorical expression, conveying important moral and religious truth. If two persons cannot travel the highway, in company, without an agreement either *expressed or understood*, no more can they pursue their heaven-ward path, in the same ecclesiastical connexion, without a mutual understanding and agreement, in their religious views, and opinions.

### DOCTRINE.

*Harmony, in religious sentiment, is necessary to ecclesiastical fellowship in God's visible covenant society.* This lies at the foundation of the existence of a Church at all; a church being a voluntary association of immortal beings, upon religious principles, and for religious purposes.\*

To discuss this doctrine, and thus bring before you the scriptural principles upon which we build our Creeds and Confessions, I shall pursue the following method:—

*First.* Has God established a Church in the world?

*Secondly.* Has He indicated, in his word, the principles on which persons are to be admitted into her fellowship?

*Thirdly.* What are the best means of carrying into effect the will of the Head of the Church, in reference to the maintenance of her unity and purity, and of harmony among her members?

In discussing this subject, my brethren, you must not expect me to attend to every cavil, and answer every petty objection, which may have been advanced against Creeds and Confessions. All you ought to anticipate, is a view of the grand principles which sustain these *subordinate standards*, and an answer to some of the leading objections.

Before proceeding to the discussion, you will allow me to define a *Creed*, and state a *principle*, which I think of considerable importance to the successful issue of my argument.

*Creed* is derived from the Latin word *Credo*, I believe, and means simply, that which any one believes, whether expressed by the living voice, or exhibited in *written or printed* language. It also sig-

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\* I do not wish to be understood as maintaining that the Church is not a Society, instituted by God, but a creature of man. I mean that all who place themselves under the dispensation of the covenant of grace, do it voluntarily. *Thy people shall be WILLING in the day of thy power.*—Ps. cx. 3.

nifies a system of evangelical truth, deduced from the scriptures, by uninspired men, printed in a book, and made a term of ecclesiastical fellowship.

Let me now state my principle ; it runs thus : “ It is lawful to draw inferences from scriptural declarations, and such inferences rightly deduced, are infallibly true and decisive.” As this is a most important principle, it may be proper to illustrate and confirm it. I deduce it from the first chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews. In it Paul is employed in proving the superiority of Christ, in his mediatorial character, to the Angels. In one instance, he quotes a passage from the Old Testament, in which Christ is called God, and from this he deduces his superiority to the Angels.

Nothing can correctly flow from truth but that which is truth, and of the same nature with the truth from which it is derived. Whatever therefore, by just consequence, is deduced from the word of God, is itself the word of God, and of truth infallible. To deny us this privilege, in the interpretation of the scriptures, is to deprive us of the principal benefit intended by them. Upon this first principle it is, that the whole ordinance of preaching is founded : and this it is, which makes whatever is, by just consequence, deduced from the word, to have the power, efficacy, and authority of the word accompanying it. Hence it is, that though it be the province of the word to quicken, regenerate, purify, and sanctify the elect ; and the word primarily and directly is that only which is written in the scriptures, yet we find all these effects produced by the public preaching of the word, when, perhaps not one verse of the scriptures has been repeated verbatim.

### I. *Has God established a Church in the world ?*

There is no one present, I presume, who will call in question the fact. Nor do I think there is any one here so daring, as to deny that He has given her officers and laws, and armed her with certain defined powers, for the government of her members, and the maintenance and defence of her rights. These are truths, so evident, I think, from scripture, that I could not but regard the denial of any one of them, either as the effect of the grossest ignorance, or as designed to elude the force of those inferences which inevitably flow from them. Although, therefore, I have formally stated this head, it is not with the intention of discussing and proving it ; but merely for the sake of some ideas which logically arrange themselves under it. Let us proceed to their consideration.

As, in this controversy, *authority* is often called for, I shall inquire into and determine the questions : Has Jesus given to ecclesiastical officers any *authority* ? If so, *how far* does it extend ?

1. *Has the Head of the Church given ecclesiastical officers any authority?*

The opponents of Creeds and Confessions grant, that the officers of the church are presbyters or elders, whose duty it is to minister in the word and sacraments. We inquire, have they any authority, and what is its extent, i. e. does it extend to the *making of a Creed or Confession of Faith*, and requiring subscription to it as a term of communion?

In II. Cor. XIII. 10, the Apostle uses these words: *According to the power which the Lord hath given me to edification.* Here the Apostle expressly declares that he *has* power. I follow this text with that in Matt. XVI. 19—*I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.* Here you have the deed of gift. By turning to Isaiah XXII. 22—*And the key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder: so he shall open and none shall shut: and he shall shut and none shall open*—the metaphor is explained. You perceive that the *key* is used in scripture as a symbol of government or power. To give to ecclesiastical officers *the keys*, is to give them power and authority in the church.

Will it be objected, that the power, of which the Apostle here speaks, is apostolic power, and is not transmitted to the successors of the Apostles? We reply. It will be granted, that the elders of the Corinthian Church, to whom the Apostle wrote relative to the incestuous person, were not Apostles, and yet he expressly attributes to them *power* to excommunicate. His expression is: *with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ*—I. Cor. v. 4. In Titus III. 10, a duty is enjoined by the Apostle, which supposes *power*; yet Titus was not an Apostle. But the power of which the Apostle speaks, II. Cor. XIII. 10, is the same with that mentioned in the passages just quoted, and is not therefore power peculiar to him as an Apostle, but common to him with the ordinary officers of the church.

The power of "*the keys*," unquestionably, means power relative to the *doctrine* and *discipline* of the church. Ecclesiastical officers have power, and that power extends to the dispensation of the gospel and gospel ordinances, and the administration of the Redeemer's system of ecclesiastical jurisprudence. They have power to *bind* and *loose*, to *open* and *shut*—to bind the culprit and loose the penitent;—to *open* the door to the worthy, and to *close* it against the impure and unworthy.

It follows, that they have a *right* to make a *Creed or Confession of Faith*, and require subscription to it as a term of communion.—

I proceed to demonstrate this. Christ gives the command to his sent servants, preach and baptize. Instruction must precede admission to sealing ordinances. Hence the injunction to examine ourselves of our *knowledge*, before approaching the Lord's table. But how is the church officer to know, that the applicant for communion has been sufficiently instructed, and has the competent knowledge, unless he examine into his attainments? It follows, that an ecclesiastical court; a church session, must, as the competent judge, holding from the Head of the church, the key of doctrine, examine the applicant *doctrinally*, as to what he does, or does not, believe; and, with this key, open or close the door, as it judges to be the mind of God, expressed in his word relative to the doctrinal worthiness or unworthiness of the applicant before it. And as it may, and of necessity must, demand an assent to what it believes to be the doctrine of God's word, when expressed *verbally*, so it may, and it has authority to demand an assent to it, when *written* or *printed*. Does it not follow, that ecclesiastical officers have authority—nay, that they are laid under an absolute necessity, from the duty enjoined on them by Christ, to make a *Creed*, and make it a *term of communion*? The fact that a duty is enjoined upon them which they *cannot* perform without a *Creed*, furnishes conclusive *inferential* evidence, that they have a right to make one and make it a term of communion.

In order to fortify this reasoning, if, indeed, it need to be strengthened, let me present you an instance of a court of Christ doing all that for which we here plead.

The example to which I refer, is found in Acts xv. 6, 28 and 29th verses. A very important question had, for some time, disturbed the harmony and comfort of the infant, Gentile churches. This question is referred to the Synod of Jerusalem, for its decision. We read in the 6th verse, *The Apostles and Elders came together for to consider of this matter*. After careful examination, and considerable discussion, they come to the decision related in the 28th and 29th verses, *For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things. That ye abstain from meats offered to idols, &c.* Here then we have a court of Christ making a doctrinal decision, declaring what, in its view was the mind of the Holy Ghost speaking in the Scriptures, and making this binding on the Churches. This it did, not by inspiration, for then there could have been no place for disputation,—the Apostles, by inspiration, could have decided the question in one moment,—but by careful examination of biblical prophecy, and rational deduction from Scriptural principles. And this too, for what purpose? For that, emphatically, for which we have always maintained *CreeDs and Confessions* to be absolutely necessary;

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namely, the maintenance of doctrinal purity and the preservation of harmony among the Members of the Body of Christ.

Will you demand any *stronger* proof, that ecclesiastical officers have a right to *make a Creed, and impose it as a term of communion?*

I have proved then, by *legitimate inference*, and positive *scriptural example*, that ecclesiastical officers have *authority* to pronounce what, in their view, is the mind of the Holy Ghost speaking in the Scriptures, and to require an assent thereto, in order to admission to ecclesiastical fellowship.

Indeed, take away this right, this authority, and you destroy their character as "*ambassadors for Christ,*" whose duty it is, to explain his instructions, and negotiate with sinners, on the footing of them so explained. You injure the church, and, in truth, do all in your power, to ruin her, by subverting her government, if you will not suffer her officers, whose duty it is to maintain and enforce them, to explain those laws, so as to make it apparent, that they enjoin one particular course of conduct and forbid another.

But, it will be asked, is not all this mere *human enactment?* Suppose we grant it, then so also was the act of the Synod of Jerusalem, yet that bound the churches.

The truth is, the principle which we laid down in the introduction, here comes into view, viz : that it is lawful to draw consequences from scripture declarations, and such consequences, correctly deduced, are infallibly true and certain ; are of paramount authority and binding on the conscience. From the duty enjoined upon church officers, I infer their authority to make a creed ; and it follows, that so far as that creed is agreeable to, and founded on the scriptures, it must bind the conscience. The question of authority is proved.

I ought not to pass, in total silence, what a late writer, in favour of the no-creed system says relative to the SYNOD of Jerusalem. It is no comfortable thing to him, to allow that court to be a Synod at all. He does not know what to call it. We would simply observe, that men of infinitely more sense and learning than he can in any way lay claim to, have called it a *Synod*, and, with all due deference, we would add, that if we must follow authority, we prefer the better to the worst.

It was, at all events, an ecclesiastical court, having *authority to legislate* for the churches, and which actually *did* do so. But, says

this writer, "they lay only necessary things upon the churches. They could not proceed to make every little thing a term of communion, and essential to church fellowship," meaning, no doubt, that our subordinate standards contain little things, non-essential to ecclesiastical fellowship.

Here then, that writer most unhappily loses sight of the argument, and forsakes his ground. His object is, to prove that there is *no authority* to make a creed and impose it as a term of communion. He ought, therefore, to show that the Synod of Jerusalem either did not do this, or that it had no authority to do it. But he does neither. Since, then, he cannot deny the *authority* of the Synod, he says they lay upon the churches only "necessary things, elemental principles," "not little things." This is a question, however, which we are not called upon to debate. Our inquiry is not, what or how many are the principles upon which we should join together in church fellowship; but, into the authority of an ecclesiastical court to make a *Creed*, and make it a *term of communion*. He does not (*he dare not*) deny the authority of the Synod to do this, nor the fact that it did do it; all his noise, therefore, about want of authority, is but empty words, but a "*sounding brass and tinkling cymbal*."

## 2. *What is the extent of this authority?*

I have proved, by just inference, and positive scriptural example, that church officers have *authority* to make a creed and impose it as a term of communion. We have seen, that the keys of doctrine and discipline have been committed to them. Their obligation to use the key of doctrine, has been already touched upon. I shall not, therefore, resume that topic. Our business is now particularly with the key of discipline. We wish it to be seen and known, that this key has been placed in their hands, by the Head of the church; that they are under obligation to use it; and that, if they do not, it is at the risk of His high displeasure and indignation.

In II. Cor. x. 8, the Apostle speaks of the *authority which the Lord hath given us*. Our inquiry is into the *extent* of this authority. Does it extend to the exclusion from, and casting out of the church, *immoral* persons and persons *unsound in the faith*? If I succeed in proving these two points, it will follow, that church officers have a right to make a Creed or Confession—that they are under an *absolute necessity* to do so—and that the latitudinarian scheme which subverts ecclesiastical discipline, is wrong and must be abandoned.

Let us proceed to the proof.—And first of *immorality*. I use this word as covering both principle and practise. To prove

that immorality is a scriptural ground of exclusion, you will think unnecessary. In this however, you are mistaken, for it is the direct tendency of this system, (as shall be shewn in due time,) to admit into the church all, no matter how immoral in principle and practice, provided only, they take care to plead the Bible in their own vindication, and say they believe the scriptures. But, that immorality is a ground of exclusion, is evident from I. Cor. v. 11—*I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat.* We are not to eat with him at our own tables, much less, surely, at the Lord's. But, if we are not to eat with him at the Lord's table, he must be excluded from ecclesiastical privileges.

The exclusion of persons *unsound in the faith*, strongly supports our system, and subverts that of our opponents. To proceed then. In Gal. v. 19, 20, 21, the Holy Spirit gives an enumeration of the works of the flesh, concluding with the declaration, that "*they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.*" Among these he mentions "*heresies.*" By heresy I understand a maintenance of error, contrary to the scriptures. Now if heretics are so classed, and if they shall not inherit the kingdom of God, they must be excluded from the church: "*A man that is an heretic, after the first and second admonition, reject.*" That which unfits a man for remaining in, equally incapacitates him for admission to the church. This point also is proved.

Now for the rejection. This is equally clear. In I. Tim. vi. 3, we read—*If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness, he is proud;—from such withdraw thyself.* And Titus III. 10—*A man that is an heretic, after the first and second admonition, reject*—that is, let him not remain in the church. Paul did excommunicate Hymeneus and Alexander; who had made shipwreck of the faith. I. Tim. I. 19, 20— *Holding faith, and a good conscience, which some having put away, concerning faith, have made shipwreck; of whom is Hymeneus and Alexander, whom I have delivered unto satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme.* In short, if you will read Rev. II. chap. throughout, you will find that Christ approves of and commends the pastors of the church of Ephesus, because they could not *suffer them that are evil*; but have *tried them which say they are Apostles and are not, and had found them liars*; while, in the same chapter He accuses the pastors of the church of Pergamos and Thyatira, and threatens them, because they had suffered heretics to be in the church. Ministerial authority, therefore, extends to the exclusion from, and casting out of, the church, persons *immoral and unsound* in the

faith. Church officers must excommunicate. But excommunication cannot be performed without a *Creed or Confession*; they therefore have a right to make a creed, and make it a term of communion.

Any system, therefore, whose tendency is to destroy ecclesiastical discipline, to retain in, and admit into, full standing in the church, persons immoral, and unsound in the faith, is unscriptural and anti-christian. But this is the genuine tendency of the no-creed system. It ought therefore to be opposed and rejected.

II. *Has Christ indicated, in this Word, the principles on which persons are to be admitted to church fellowship?*

He has, most unquestionably. They only are to be admitted who believe the doctrine of Christ, and have a corresponding deportment. The scriptures every where designate all as "*aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise,*" except such as have "*repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.*"

The mere profession of belief in Christ never was, by the Apostles, considered as a sufficient ground for admission into the church. How many could have said, we believe in Christ, who were nevertheless grossly ignorant of the doctrines of his word! How many can yet do this!

What is involved in that declaration, "*I believe that Jesus Christ is the son of God,*" the confession of the Ethiopian Eunuch to Philip's declaration, "*if thou believest with all thy heart thou mayest?*" Did it not involve a knowledge and belief of the doctrines and prophecies of the Old Testament concerning Messiah? Without such a knowledge and belief, could the Eunuch have made that noble, that intelligent confession, on the footing of which he was baptized and admitted into the church? Where would there have been a foundation for true faith? An implicit faith there might have been; but a saving faith, the faith of God's elect, which is accompanied with the full "*assurance of understanding,*" there could not have been.

It does not appear then, that the mere saying, "*I believe in Christ,*" did, in the apostolic ages, admit to church fellowship; nor can it now, when confessedly there are many who will say, "*we believe in Christ,*" who, nevertheless, are grossly ignorant of his person, work, and offices.

As, in this head, I am establishing a principle from which I mean

to reason in the following part of the discourse, allow me to dwell, for a few moments, on the interview which took place between Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch.

The Eunuch, returning to his own country, sat in his chariot reading the prophet Isaiah. Philip, by the command of the Holy Spirit, going near and joining himself to the chariot, heard him read a portion of the fifty-third chapter of that Prophet. "Understandest thou," said he, "what thou readest?" "How can I," replied the Eunuch, "except some man should guide me?"—"And Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus." In preaching Jesus from that passage, what must Philip have done? Undoubtedly he must have taught the incarnation of Messiah; the substitutionary nature of his sacrifice; and the divinity of his person, to give worth and value to his obedience and sufferings; and, in one word, shewn that all the promises, prophecies, types and shadows of the Old Testament ritual, concerning the Messiah, had received their complete accomplishment in Jesus of Nazareth.

Did Philip in this teach his own creed, that is, what he believed to be taught by the Spirit in that passage? Did the Eunuch believe as Philip taught him? And on the footing of his so believing, was he baptized and admitted into the church?

Here then is a *Creed* taught, and a *Creed* professed; not a *written* one indeed, but one to all intents and purposes *understood*, and made the basis of connexion with the church. What, let me ask, is the difference between a creed professed in words and one written upon paper?

On a deportment corresponding to our profession, as a ground of admission into the church, I need not delay.

I have now completed all I intended under the two first heads, and, perhaps, some may think that I have, as yet, done little to establish my own cause, and overthrow the citadel which I profess to storm: while others, it may be, of more penetration, will perceive that the cause of Creeds and Confessions is in an attitude of successful assault, while the citadel attacked totters to its fall.

Before proceeding to the final assault, permit me to shew you the ground I have gained, and the forces I bring to the conflict to secure the victory. To speak without a figure, let me state the principles I have proved, and from which I mean to reason, in the latter part of this discourse. *First*, I have settled the question of authority to make a creed and impose it as a term of communion. *Secondly*, I have determined the *extent* of that authority, and shewn

that it reaches to the exclusion from, and casting out of, the church, persons immoral, and unsound in the faith; which cannot be done without a *Creed*. *Thirdly*, I have shewn the principles on which persons are to be admitted to church fellowship, namely, on an intelligent profession of belief in the doctrines of God's word, and a corresponding deportment; which cannot be ascertained without a creed.

Let us now proceed to the latter part of our discourse, which is—

III. *What is the system best calculated for carrying into effect the will of the Head of the church, relative to the preservation of her unity and purity, and the maintenance of harmony among her members? Is it that which we combat or the one which we defend?* To determine this, we must contrast them.

Before proceeding to do this, you will indulge me in a few observations. The system which I now oppose, is not new. It dates not its origin with the gentlemen who have lately advanced it in this country. The same artillery was long since, by *Arian heretics*, pointed against orthodoxy, in lands lying beyond the Atlantic. The gentleman who in this country, has stood foremost in defence of this system, has the honour of doing no more than reviving an ancient heresy. The Anabaptists of Germany, long since, endeavoured to free themselves from the trammels of ecclesiastical discipline.

This system has not, as yet, made much progress. I do not say that it does not seem to succeed;\* its success, however, will ultimately resemble that of the skiff, that, strongly impelled by the oar, at first seems to advance against the roaring cataract, but, at last, borne away by the irresistible current, is hurried headlong into the foaming vortex of destruction.

Wherever this system has been broached, it has at first, by its plausibility,† produced an agitation, and some well meaning persons

\* And no wonder. When the privileges of the church are made so cheap, who would not buy? When her doors are thrown open so widely, who would not enter? If this system be not calculated, so far as human policy goes, to enlarge congregations, I know of no one that is. Men do not like to suffer the penalties of law, although they have no hesitation in breaking it, and will therefore gladly flock into a church in which, upon its own system, they have no church censures to apprehend.

† The pretence of the advocates of the no-creed system is, that *Creeeds and Confessions* are unscriptural, and therefore cannot bind the conscience—that the express words of the Bible alone can do this. They are, in some measure, justified in this by those churches which, while they advocate creeds, do virtually abandon them, by not making them *bona fide* a term of communion. We have proved them to be scriptural. They must, therefore, be binding on the conscience—so far as agreeable to, and founded upon the Bible.

A good reason why *Creeeds and Confessions* should not be as obligatory upon the

have been carried away by it ; but, so soon as reason resumed her seat and seized the helm, the reeling bark, has shot away into the safe and secure harbour of Creeds and Confessions.

Permit me to add, that as in the further progress of this discourse, I shall be constrained to allude to gentlemen with whose names you are well acquainted, I wish it to be understood distinctly, and once for all, that I totally disclaim all hostility towards them personally. The gentlemen I respect ; their opinions I most sincerely dislike ; and shall oppose and expose with all the powers I possess. This I believe to be due from me to *you*, to *my people*, to the *church*, to *my God*.

To begin with the system I oppose. Keep in recollection, that it is a distinguished feature in this system to look down all distinction in religious sects. The terms Arian, Socinian, Hopkinsian, Sabelian, &c. &c. as indicative of variety in religious sentiment, are unknown to it. Indeed, its professed object is to bring together, into one religious association, persons of every variety of religious opinion ; and you find every where emblazoned upon it, and written in large and legible characters upon its vestibule, this most false and mistaken sentiment—"It is no matter what a man believes, if his heart be good."

1. *This system opposes an ultimate principle of the human constitution.*

It opposes a human creed. Now I venture to maintain that a human being cannot exist without a human creed. Try for yourselves. Take any subject you please ; examine it, and ask yourselves individually, what do I believe concerning this ? Your answer will be your creed, expressed in your own language, and therefore human. Select a passage of scripture, read it carefully, and then ask yourselves, what do I believe to be taught in this passage ? Your answer will be your creed, expressed in your own language, and therefore human. It does not alter the case, that you repeat the text in the very words of the Bible ; you must and will conceive of some idea as conveyed by the words—that is your own creed.

members as the officers of the church—in other words, why private members should not be as rigidly sworn to them as official ones—I have never yet seen. The Head of the church has given her laws as a *body*. By them as such she is to be bound.—Private members are as deeply interested in her laws as her public functionaries, and as conscientiously bound to yield submission to them, as the functionaries are to administer them. It is as necessary that the governed know the code and submit to it, as those who govern. If I am to be governed by the laws of Christ, as embodied in their *applicatory form* in Creeds and Confessions, I must at least be required to submit to them—to subscribe to them ; otherwise I am not bound to obey them under *that form* of exhibition and application.

If these standards contain the laws of Christ's house, should not the members of his house *swear* obedience to them ? Is it not their *duty* ?

Men carry their creeds with them into every department of life. By them their every action, whether political or religious, is regulated ; they act upon their principles ; and cannot but do so. When they enter into the national compact, they write down their political creed in the form of a constitution, and swear to maintain it.

None are admitted into the national family, but upon their swearing to this instrument—to maintain it inviolate—to live according to its provisions for the national welfare—to defend it with their blood and treasure—and all who will not so swear, are esteemed and treated as aliens.

A foreigner presents himself, and desires to become a citizen of the United States. The *Constitution* is put into his hand, and he is told, that if he will swear to that, he can become a citizen. Reading it over, he meets with an article repugnant to his political views. He says, I cannot swear to *this* constitution. Why ? Because it is at variance with my political principles. Would not the Organ of government reply, you cannot then be admitted to citizenship ? And would not the one who would find fault with the United States for acting thus, accusing them of political tyranny over the conscience, be laughed at ?

Upon what principle, in this case, does the government act ? Upon that contained in our text, “how can two walk together except they be agreed.” How can two walk together politically, unless they be politically agreed ? How, otherwise, can national unity and harmony be preserved, and the great objects of the national society be obtained ?

Men carry their *creeds* into the church, and associate together upon the footing of harmony in religious sentiment ; “*walking by the same rule, and minding the same things,*”—for “*how can two walk together except they be agreed ?*” You may prevail upon persons differing in their political sentiments, to live together in harmony, much more easily than you can upon those who differ in their religious opinions. The reason is obvious, the latter are of infinitely more importance than the former.

Why will not the Lion associate with the Ox ? Why will not the Wolf with the Lamb ? Their natures are totally dissimilar.—Why will not the sober man associate with the drunkard ?—the honest man with the thief ?—the man of polished mind and manners with the clown ?—why not the man of piety and virtue, with the unprincipled libertine and infidel ? East is not more distant from the west, than are they from each other in their feelings and sentiments.

As then we find that human beings never associate together without a bond of agreement, either expressed or understood—try every association you please, from the band of robbers, combined to plunder on the highway, to the London Bible Society, formed for the dissemination of the scriptures; we must conclude it to be constitutional to man to have a creed. But the no-creed system opposes this constitutional principle, by refusing us the right of expressing, in our own language, scripture truth, and having our consciences bound by our belief, while yet it is constitutionally impossible that it should be otherwise.

That this system does, in *theory*, oppose this principle, is evident from the fact, that its friends and supporters do, in *practice*, act upon it. They say we must have no human creed, to bind the conscience, and yet they have one, and feel themselves bound by it. You ask, in astonishment, what is it? As nearly as I can gather from their published sentiments, it is to the following effect: We believe that a human being should not have a human creed to bind his conscience; i. e. that the conscience of a human being, should not be bound by what he believes to be taught in the scriptures, if it be expressed in his own language; that a profession of belief in the Bible is all that is necessary to communion in the church; that it is no matter what a man believes if his heart be good; that Calvinists, Socinians, Arians, Armenians, &c. &c. should all sit down together at the Lord's table, and that this is communion of Saints; that it is right to enter into ecclesiastical fellowship, on such principles; and they actually do so, having these principles *understood* as their bond of union, and their *conscience bound* by them, for they go forward most conscientiously, in their opposition to *CreeDs* and *Confessions*.

2. *Those who advocate this system, do, in practice, contradict their own theory, and have recourse to the system of CreeDs and Confessions.*

I do not know, from actual inspection, how they manage in the admission of persons to communion in their congregations. If, however, their writings are to be credited, they content themselves with requiring an acknowledgment of the scriptures of the Old and New Testament to be the word of God, and the only rule of faith and practice. In corroboration of this, I need only say, that one of their most respectable clergymen did, on a late occasion, preach a sermon on the official relations of New Testament elders, in which he makes a creed, of which this is the leading feature, and on the footing of which he ordained men to the office of the eldership.—More, surely, will not be required for admission to membership, than to the discharge of official functions in the church.

The creed to which I refer, consists of three articles, as follow :—

1. "Do you believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the word of the living God, the only rule of faith and practice?"
2. "Do you promise diligently to exercise the gift which God has bestowed upon you, for his glory, and the good of this church, and in dependence on his grace, to "take heed to yourselves, and the flock" over which you are made overseers?"
3. "Do you promise to maintain "the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace," and to cultivate love and harmony with your brethren in office?"

This then, is that gentleman's Confession of Faith or Creed—a *human* one too—and made binding upon the men ordained to office, although his whole system positively forbids the attempt to impose any obligations on officers or members of the church, except in the express words of scripture! Is this creed in the express words of scripture? And has not that gentleman, in all this, most strangely contradicted his own principles? Is it not time to relinquish a system which reduces its votaries to such a pass?

Let us dwell for a moment or two upon this creed made by one man ("in the multitude of counsellors," the wise man tells us, "there is safety,") and bound upon the conscience of the men ordained to office. As this gentleman and his followers so frequently demand from us *authority* for our creeds, and their imposition upon the conscience, have we not a very good right to request, in turn, from him *his* authority for *his* creed, and its *imposition* upon the conscience of the men ordained to office. Upon his own principle he has *none*, and yet he has dared to make a creed, and bind it upon the conscience. Surely that gentleman should honestly consign his book to the flames, and no longer attempt to deceive, "by words without wisdom."

Once more; will that gentleman or his followers, point to the place in the Bible where the Apostles require a profession of belief in the Scriptures, as a ground of admission into the church? It will take all the penetration, and a great deal more than they possess, to find any such thing. If then, they be sincere in their profession of returning to primitive usages, why, in this, do they diverge so far from them?

3. *I am opposed to this system, because in its operation, its direct tendency is to corrupt the Church.*

In this, I do not assert too much, nor more than I can easily prove. To do this, I shall take the two only methods, so far as I

can perceive from the writings of its friends, in which they can apply it, and examine each in order. In admitting persons to communion, they either require an assent to certain passages of scripture, or a profession merely of belief in the Bible.

First, *they require an assent to certain texts of scripture.* In a book given to the world by one of the leading advocates of this system, I find the following texts of scripture exhibited as a divine creed:—Heb. xi. 6—*He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.* I. Cor. xvi. 22—*If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema, Maranatha.* Matt. xii. 32—*But whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come.* This, it is said, is a *divine Creed.* We revere these passages of scripture as much as any one can do; that they should be called a *Creed*, we have no objections.

Let us see how the reverend gentleman will apply it. Will he content himself with requiring merely an assent to it? Then the *Socinian*, who denies the *Trinity*, and the *divinity* of Jesus, but who, notwithstanding, says he loves Christ, goes into the church: The *Arian* also, who rejects the *Trinity*, and maintains that Christ is no more than a *super-angelic* being, goes into the church. These would subscribe these texts at once—would say they heartily believe them, though they reject the doctrine of the *Trinity* taught in them, and would, of course, go into the church. But these are heretics who are to be rejected. This mode therefore corrupts the church, and those who act upon it are unfaithful to their duties as rulers.

But let us suppose that the gentleman wishes to be faithful in the House of God, (and I verily believe he does;) is fully satisfied that a sound evangelical faith is necessary to communion in the church; and aware that the mere profession of belief in these passages of scripture will not let him into the views which the applicant entertains of them, or of saving faith as distinguished from a historical, a temporary faith, or a faith of miracles; how shall he proceed to ascertain these views and satisfy his own mind that this person should be admitted? Will he question him? Do you believe in Christ? Yes. Will he stop here? *The devils believe and tremble.* Will he then ask, what is faith in Christ? Fidelity to the Head of the church requires this, that he may be satisfied that the applicant understands the nature of saving faith; but here is the difficulty, upon his own principle he dare not. For suppose the applicant in answer to the question, what is faith in Jesus Christ? (if he choose to answer at all) should say, it is a belief that such a man as Jesus Christ existed on this earth; would the reverend gen-

man agree that this is saving faith? Would he not say, no, that is not saving faith, but it is "*a-receiving and resting upon Christ,*" and you, while entertaining this view of saving faith, cannot be admitted into the church. The applicant would say, this is your creed but not mine—your view of saving faith but not mine—mine is as good as yours—I demand admission, on your own principle.

Let us now try the second mode of procedure, viz: *requiring a profession of belief in the Bible.* Upon this principle, every sect that claims the name of christian, must be admitted into the church; for where is the sect pretending to christianity at all, that does not profess to believe the Bible. "Those who give heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils, forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received, must be admitted. Those who maintain the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, and plead for a community of wives;—who plead for divorce, incest, and even fornication, must be admitted. Those who deny the christian Sabbath, baptism, and the Lord's Supper, and the obligation of the moral law, must be admitted. Those who maintain the supreme divinity of the Saviour; those who maintain that he is a super-angelic being; those who assert that he is a fallible, sinful being like ourselves; those who deny his humanity altogether, and contend that his birth, death, resurrection, and ascension, were only imaginary—all these must be admitted into the church. If only willing to subscribe the Scriptures, they could not be rejected.

"The Flagellantes, who thought that salvation was to be obtained by faith and whipping, must be admitted.

"The Circoncillions also. These ancient fanatics, with the clubs of Israel in their hands, and the war-whoop of "praise be to God" in their mouths, sallied forth in frantic fury, to redress grievances and right the wrongs of the oppressed. They enfranchised slaves, liberated debtors, cancelled bonds, and forced masters to change places with their servants. With the clubs of Israel, (they used no swords, Christ having forbidden one to Peter,) with the clubs of Israel, breaking the bones of their victims, and pouring into their eyes a solution of quicklime and vinegar, they left them to perish in the utmost agonies. Violating their vows, they gave themselves up to wine and every species of excess. At last, by voluntary martyrdom, or suicide, they terminated a series of unexampled atrocities." These you, no doubt, will consider a very coarse sort of christians, yet, upon the principle we combat, they must be admitted into the church. If only willing to subscribe the Bible, they could not be excluded."

Upon this principle, Armenians, Socinians, Arians, Sabellians,

Swedenborgians, Roman Catholics, Adamites, Cainites, Serpentarians, Anabaptists, Amsdorffians, Beguines, Libertines, and every abominable fanatic, that has ever disgraced the name of religion from the days of Simeon Stylites, to this hour, must be admitted into the church. If only willing to subscribe the Bible, they could not be excluded. Nor could their tenets be condemned; for if you would offer any thing in opposition to them, they could and would reply just as the opponents of Creeds and Confessions reply to their advocates, you are as fallible, as liable, and likely to err as any Arian or Armenian—our opinion is as likely to be right as yours.

If also, it may be added, any of the friends of the no-creed system should dare to oppose these heretics, or refuse them communion in the church, how easily could *these* retort upon *those* all the language which they so liberally bestow upon the friends of Creeds and Confessions. "Let us suppose a Nicolaitane to present himself for admission to ecclesiastical communion. The clergyman belonging to the no-creed system tells him you cannot be admitted so long as you plead for a community of wives. He replies that, in the days of the Apostles *"they had all things common."* The clergyman begins to explain that passage, and shew the absurdity of his opinion. He replies, the Bible is my creed, I am willing to subscribe its doctrines, nay, I am willing to seal it with my blood; but I am not willing to subscribe your opinions. The Bible is an infallible standard, try me by that, but I am not willing to be tried by the fallible standard of your opinions. If the Bible be an infallible standard, can you add to infallibility? The Bible is a perfect rule, try me by that; but I will not be tried by the imperfect rule of your opinions. No man, nor body of men, has a right to prescribe terms of communion between me and Christ, other than he has himself prescribed, which is a belief of his doctrine as contained in his word."

You may, perhaps, be disposed to think that I deal too harshly with this system, and that persons of the description which I have mentioned, would not be admitted. I would be glad to find it so—that I am mistaken. None, I can safely say, would be more ready to recall what they had uttered hastily, and without due reflection, than I would. But in this instance, I am not mistaken. The nature of the system itself, without all peradventure, tends to that which I have asserted. Judge for yourselves. Besides, I have heard it avowed by one of their own leaders. He maintained that a Socinian celebrated the death of the same divine person,\* which Cal-

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\* By this expression we do not mean that a *divine* person either did or could die. Jesus Christ is a divine person; but he took into union with his person the human nature. Jesus Christ died in his *human* nature. The blood which He shed on the

vinists did, and avowed his readiness to sit down with a Socinian at the Lord's table. And have you not heard it avowed publicly, by a disciple of the same theology, that he would have no hesitation to sit down at the Lord's table with Roman Catholics, religionists who pray to Saints and Angels, and who believe in a purgatory, &c. &c.

You see, then, that I am not mistaken; and that such persons would be admitted. This system, therefore, reduces its followers to the alternative either of going deliberately forward, in the corruption of the church, by admitting into her those who, I have proved, are to be excluded; or contradicting their own principles, and availing themselves of the system which they revile, that of Creeds and Confessions.

4. *I am opposed to this system because it corrupts the ministry.*

Has God indicated, in his word, who are to communicate authority to minister in holy things? I think He has. The Apostle, when writing to Timothy, gives him this charge: "*Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the LAYING ON OF THE HANDS OF THE PRESBYTERY.*" The Presbytery then is the court which communicates authority.

But, according to the system which I oppose, a church session is the highest ecclesiastical court; has authority to ordain, and, of course, to license; and, if I am not misinformed, has already dared to license. We have not, as yet, I think, an instance of ordination by the same authority, and God grant we never may.

If then the Presbytery is the door of admission to the exercise of clerical functions, those who enter another way, have much reason to apprehend the displeasure of the Head of the Church. They certainly have no right to be received as Ministers of Christ, for He has not sent them. That a "Schoolmaster, now and then conceives the bold idea, that it is no sin for him to read the Bible to his neighbours," is no proof that he has been called by God to preach the Gospel. That he or some illiterate mechanic, should take up the belief that he has a right to preach, and should forthwith enter upon the discharge of clerical functions, is no proof that he is not an intruder, else we much mistake the meaning of that text, **•HEB. v. 4—No man taketh this honour to himself.** If I understand the Scriptures aright, there is no blessing promised to their ministrations, but rather the contrary, for I read, Jer. xxiii. 32, *Yet I sent them not, nor commanded them: therefore they shall not profit*

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cross is called the blood of God. "Feed the church of God, which He hath purchased with his own blood."—Acts xx. 28.

*this people at all, saith the Lord.* Those who countenance them; are taught the aspect which their conduct wears in the view of God, by these words, II. Jno. v. 11—*He that biddeth him God speed, is partaker of his evil deeds.* In one word, we would leave for the consideration of such, this text, Jno. x. 1—*He that entereth not by the door the same is a thief and a robber.*

5. *This system subverts the Presbyterian form of Church Government.*

The form of government, according to this system, is independency. Of this I cannot find the least trace, in the Scriptures; but I do find there the Presbyterian form. The highest officers of the church are called Presbyters, and the court which ordains to the Ministerial office, is called a Presbytery—“*by the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery.*”

The leading features of Presbyterianism, are in my view the following—the Ministers are all upon a footing of equality—Elders, or Presbyters who rule—superior and subordinate courts of judicature.

According to this system, a person who is aggrieved by the decision of a church session, has it in his power, by the right of *Appeal*, to carry his case to the superior judicature, have it examined by disinterested and impartial men, and justice awarded.

But, according to the system which I oppose, the highest court is the Session. From its decision lies no appeal—how harshly soever any one may have been dealt with—how unjustly soever you may have been suspended or excommunicated,—there is no redress.

The independents would, it is true, have us to believe that there is a remedy for this grievance in those *councils* of which they speak so much. Permit me here to lay before you the sentiments, if I recollect right, of that eminent advocate for orthodoxy, *Dr. Miller, of Princeton, New-Jersey.* He says, and he has a good right to be well informed upon this subject, that the remedy from these councils, is more imaginary than real. The parties at variance may or may not agree to call one—when called it has no other power than to give *advice*, which may or may not be followed. Nay, he adds, this is not the worst of it. Each party may call a separate council; and two or more of these have been known to be sitting within the bounds of the same independent congregation, deliberating upon the same subject, and all coming to different decisions, so that the advice of no two of them could be followed throughout.

Upon which of these systems, I ask, is justice most likely to be done to a member of the church? Which court will be most likely to proceed in a case before it, with caution and deliberation?—that one from whose decision lies no appeal—or that which knows that its decisions are liable to be examined by a superior court, and, if wrong, reversed?

Would you not think it a hard case, if you had no appeal from what you conscientiously believed to be an unjust judgment of a civil magistrate?

Bad as might be your case politically, this system which we combat, puts you into one, in a spiritual point of view, infinitely worse. Indeed, to speak plainly, if you are to look for *spiritual tyranny* in any ecclesiastical system, it is in this very one.

Is this system, I ask now, do you think, calculated to glorify the Head of the church; promote harmony and love among her members; and work all the wonders fabled by its admirers?

Let us now proceed to set in contrast with this, that which we maintain and defend. I advocate *Creeds and Confessions*, because,

1. *They make an explicit declaration of the way in which we understand the Scriptures.*

In a matter of such moment as that of ecclesiastical fellowship, it is necessary to be explicit. If light is to have no fellowship with darkness, nor Christ with Belial, we must take all the steps authorized by the Bible, (I have proved that *Creeds and Confessions* are of divine authority) to prevent such a connexion, and demonstrate that we, as church members, are not in such a connexion.

By *Creeds and Confessions* ALONE, can this, in the present state of the world, be done. In them is exhibited plainly, the *way* in which we understand scriptural declarations. Upon such an understanding alone, of the Bible, we frankly say, can we hold ecclesiastical fellowship with any one. We conceal not, from the world, our sentiments. We court their examination by the learned, as well as the unlearned. We say, satisfy us by logical deduction from scriptural premises, or sound explication of scriptural passages, that any sentiment contained in these subordinate standards is wrong, and we are ready to relinquish it.

In order to be explicit, however, it is not necessary to be tyrannical. When therefore, we say, “thus we understand the scriptures, and upon such an understanding of them alone, can we hold

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communion with any one," we leave it with those who desire connexion with us, to say whether, having made the necessary examination, they can meet us on these terms—whether we "*can walk together, being agreed.*" We offer no violence—we infringe no one article of christian liberty.

We cannot consent to become unsound in principle, in order to hold communion with those who are. This would not be *going on to perfection*. True it is, some may thus be excluded from the church, who would otherwise be admitted; but what then? it never has been the practice of the truly orthodox and pious, to enlarge the numbers of the church at the expense of her purity. We cannot consent to augment our numbers at the risk of the destruction of those fundamental principles established in the preceding part of this discourse. And we are encouraged to steadiness in this respect from that cheering declaration, "*Fear not little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.*"

The system which we oppose, is not thus explicit—no one knows what its disciples believe. The unwary and unthinking are deceived by its great pretensions to *liberality*. They are misled by the declarations of its friends, that it is the only system which secures liberty of conscience! Whereas, in truth, if I know any thing about *christian liberty*, the liberty for which they plead, is pure licentiousness. It is a liberty for a person to enjoy membership in the church, no matter what he believes, if he only profess to believe the scriptures—To enjoy the highest ecclesiastical privileges; to have their children baptized, and to partake of the eucharistic feast; and yet to believe what they please, to think what they please, to say what they please, and to do what they please, if they only take care to shelter themselves by saying they believe the Bible!—*To eat their own bread and wear their own apparel; provided only, they be called by the name of Christ to take away their reproach.* From such a liberty may the good Lord deliver us.

Commend me, say I, to the church whose principles I can examine at my leisure, and test by the Word of God;—into whose fellowship, therefore, I can enter, with a perfect understanding of the principles of my ecclesiastical associates; with whom *I can take sweet counsel and go into the house of the Lord*; in entering into which, I run no risk of encountering an *Arian* or *Socinian* upon the very threshold, or, O horrible! of meeting those blasphemers of my Saviour, at his own holy table.

2. *Creeds and Confessions hold up a testimony for the truth, and oppose a barrier to error.*

We read in the prophecy of Isaiah LIX. 19—*When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the LORD shall lift up a stan-*

standard against him. Examine the scriptures generally, and say whether you do not find God's Prophets and Apostles uniformly testifying for the truth, and opposing error. Indeed the church has always been plagued with errorists, and is taught to expect that she shall be, even in "*the last days*," the gospel dispensation. *In the last days*, saith the Apostle, *perilous times shall come*.—"Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse."

The church has no greater enemies than those who, as the Apostle expresseth it, "*privily bring into her damnable heresies*." Errorists have always been her worst plagues. Against them the soldiers of the cross are bound to lift up the standard of the Spirit. This is done in the public preaching of the Word—the exhibition of pure evangelical truth, and doctrinal opposition to error wherever it shows itself. It is done also, in stating religious sentiments explicitly to the world, and putting upon record a solemn TESTIMONY against errors.

The standard is also to be lifted up in the admission of persons to ecclesiastical fellowship. This can be done in no other way than by the church's embodying her views of scripture truth in a systematic form, and requiring subscription thereof, in order to communion in the church. By the no-creed system, we have demonstrated, that heretics cannot be excluded from the church. The standard of the Spirit cannot be lifted up against them, in their admission to ecclesiastical fellowship,

That our Creeds and Confessions oppose a barrier to the admission of error into the church, is evident from the fact, that we never hear any one who had *intelligently* embraced them, finding fault with them until he has become tainted with error. So true is this, that I could not fail to suspect a man's orthodoxy the moment I heard him call them in question. How many will you hear railing against these formularies, whom, when you know their reasons, you find to be opposed to the doctrines of the *decrées*, *election*, and *reprobation*!—to ecclesiastical discipline—and to the government and order of the church, as laid down in them. In a word, why is it that heretics are so violently opposed to *them*, and such ardent advocates of the *no-creed system*? For this simple reason, that the former condemn their heresies, and exclude them from the church,—the latter does neither.

Thus the purity of the church is preserved. In no other way can you keep out of her communion persons unsound in the faith. The whole history of the church shews that wherever a rigid adherence to a sound evangelical Creed has obtained, that denomination has remained pure; and, on the contrary, wherever it has not, defection and impurity have ensued.

3. *Credo*s and Confessions maintain the unity of the church, and harmony among her members.

We have seen, in the preceding part of this discourse, the true operation of the no-creed system, viz: the admission into the church of persons of every variety of religious opinion. Can you discover the *uniting bond* between religionists of such a variety, difference, and opposition, in religious sentiment? Suppose a congregation composed of persons, some of whom maintained the religious opinions of Calvinists, others of Armenians—some, of the Shakers, others of the Methodists—some, of the Socinians, others of high and low Arians, and of Sabellians—some, of the Baptists, others of the Quakers—Could there, think you, be in that congregation unity in doctrine, worship and discipline? The confusion of Babel, would, in our opinion, be comparatively nothing to the disorder which must inevitably reign there. In vain would you look in such a heterogeneous assemblage, for the characteristics of the *true church of Christ*—“*One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all.*” In vain would you seek there for “*the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*”

Could a Calvinist and a Socinian dwell together in harmony in the same religious society? The Calvinist adores the Saviour as a divine person; the Socinian, in the opinion of the Calvinist, blasphemes Him by denying his divinity. The Calvinist thinks he is right,—the Socinian thinks he is right. They both feel themselves bound to propagate their opinions, and oppose each other's sentiments as erroneous. The Calvinist looks upon the Socinian as a heretic, who should be excluded from the church,—the Socinian returns the compliment, viewing the Calvinist as an irrational bigot, who gives his faith to the grossest absurdities. Now, I ask, upon what principles, either natural, or religious, are these to “*walk together?*” As soon, we would think, might hell relinquish its hate and join in sweet harmony with heaven.

But the no-creed system cuts the knot—it solves the difficulty in a way, which must fill you with unspeakable astonishment—Charity, love, divine love, is to do this ! ! O, my God, is it true that thy word requires me love a Socinian, a blasphemer of my blessed Redeemer, one who would wrench from me my only hope of eternal bliss!—O ! must I love him as a *child of God!*—must I love him as an *heir of glory!*—must I *give him a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple!* Shew me, shew me a disciple of Christ, one who wears his heavenly seal upon his forehead, and, God knows, I would take him to my bosom, I would cherish him as a brother; but, O I must not, I cannot act thus to one on whose visage I trace the lineaments of the wicked one. Yes, I will pray for him, I will

love him as the workmanship of the finger of God, but I cannot love him as a *new creature in Christ Jesus*.

And the primitive christians are presented as an example of this love! Can this be so? Did the Apostles love heretics? Did the Apostle John, when he fled from the bath in which the heretic Cerinthus made his appearance, as from a pestilence, resolved to have no fellowship with (what another Apostle styles) such "*a child of the devil, and enemy of all righteousness!*" Exactly in point, also, is the conduct of Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna. Marcion, the heretic, meeting him in the street, and resenting his omission of saluting him, called out to him, "Polycarp, own us." The good man replied, "I do own thee to be the first born of satan." So religiously cautious, says Irenæus, were the Apostles and their followers, not, so much as by discourse, to communicate with any who did adulterate and corrupt the word.

But upon the principle of Creeds and Confessions, such discord in the church cannot take place. There is no room for it, because the same doctrines are believed—the principles are perfectly understood—and we mutually vow to adhere to, and maintain them—and this we do *intelligently, after careful examination*.

As however, men are imperfect and liable to alter in their views, if at any time any one should change his belief relative to certain doctrines of our Confession, as for instance, the decrees, the divinity of Jesus, the extent of the atonement, &c.—they must say so. Their reasons and difficulties are heard. If they can be set right, it is well; if not, they are cast out of the church. Why? Because a man that is a heretic is to be rejected; and how shall two walk together unless they be agreed?

4. *Creeds and Confessions shew the attainments which the church has made, and enable her to hold them fast.*

The Apostle, II. Tim. i. 13, directs to Timothy these words—*Hold fast the form of sound words*. Also, in Rev. ii. 25—*But that which ye have already, hold fast till I come*. The life of the christian is a life of progressive growth and improvement. For this reason, it is, that it is compared to the shining light that shineth more and more until the perfect day. He is to grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ. He is to add to his graces. II. Pet. i. 5—*Besides this, giving all diligence, add to your faith, virtue; &c.* He is to make attainments, and hold them fast when made—he is not to backslide. That which is true of a member of the church, is true of all her members—is true of her as a body—she must make attainments in divine truth, and hold them fast when made,

By a man's saying, I believe the Bible, could you know what progress he had made in the knowledge of its doctrines? Could you know this by his merely repeating texts of scripture? If the church had not published a *Confession*, could it ever have been known what progress she had made in the knowledge of divine truth and reformation from Popery?

When attainments have been made, are they to be held fast? This is the injunction upon Timothy—"hold fast," do not let go. There are persons lying in wait to corrupt the faith, but do you guard against them and adhere to it. Now, how was this young divine to do this? Was it by preaching unsound doctrine? This was not what he had learnt of the Apostle, but "*sound words*." Was it by suffering the heretical to be in the church, or admitting such into her? To allow heretics to remain in, or to admit them into the church to corrupt the truth, would not, in our humble opinion, be to hold it fast. But, upon the principle of the no-creed system, they must be admitted. By Creeds and Confessions alone can they be excluded; they are, therefore, necessary to enable the church to hold fast her attainments. The church does in fact say, in these formularies are embodied the doctrines which the labours of many ages, and of the most learned and pious men the world ever saw, have shewn to be taught in the scriptures. We believe these to be taught in the Bible—we have attained to these. That other doctrines may be contained there, to the knowledge of which we have not attained, we will not deny; but these we firmly believe to be there. We do not say our knowledge of God's truth is perfect. Let not examination be repressed; go on to perfection. *But this much we have, and we will hold it fast.* We will endeavour after additions, but will suffer no dilapidations.

I quoted also a passage from the second chapter of the Revelation—"But that which ye have already, hold fast till I come." By turning to this passage, you will find that it follows the two epistles, sent by the Head of the church, to the churches of Pergamos and Thyatira. To the first He says, "*I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where satan's seat is; and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith—But I have a few things against thee.*" To the latter, "*I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; notwithstanding I have a few things against thee.*" Now is it not evident to any one of the least penetration, that Christ here approves of these churches, for the attainments which they had made, and disapproves of their deficiency in not purging the church from heretics; but suffering them to remain in her, to teach and seduce his servants? To "*hold fast*," in this connexion, evidently involves in it the exercise of ecclesiastical discipline. As if the Redeemer

had said, "you have, contrary to my express will, suffered these errorists to remain in the church, to seduce my servants and teach them false doctrine. I now admonish you to maintain my truth pure; and, in order thereto, take immediately, such steps as I have indicated in my law, to cast out of communion such as labour to corrupt it." But Creeds and Confessions alone enable the church to do this; they are, therefore, necessary to enable us to hold fast that which we have.

*5. Creeds and Confessions furnish manuals for the religious education of youth.*

Between the volumes of Nature and divine Revelation, there are many pleasing analogies. One is, that in the former, objects lie scattered without any particular scientific arrangement or classification, and we are left to classify them for our own use. These objects still occupy their place in that volume, shine there in all their splendour, and may there be contemplated by all those who either have access to them, or a taste for such studies.

To facilitate their acquisition of a knowledge of these objects, and to aid them in the recollection of them, mankind have had recourse to a scientific arrangement of them. Why, or for what purpose are human beings endowed with a faculty of arrangement or classification? Without it, comparatively little advance could be made in the sciences. Hence systems of Geography, Astronomy, Grammar, Arithmetic, &c. &c. In these systems of the sciences, men eminent for their acquirements, have given the result of their labours to aid those who follow them in the same inquiries and studies. But, because these systems are the result of the labours of others, and contain their views, shall we refuse to avail ourselves of their aid? Because, in studying a system of astronomy, we may embrace the views taught in that system, shall we, therefore, refuse all the aid it may furnish to make us acquainted with that science? Lest our children should believe the principles taught in a system of Geography, shall we command them to traverse the Globe to study Geography? Must they know nothing of Chemistry, till they can set in operation all the mechanical means necessary to bring them in contact with the objects on which it treats? Must they remain ignorant of Astronomy, till they instinctively, or by some happy idea, hit upon the principles of the Telescope? Because my neighbour lights the torch, shall I refuse to avail myself of its beams to conduct me in a path which otherwise I could not find? Then farewell to our Seminaries and Colleges; and let us prepare ourselves patiently to see our children grow up in the ignorance of the Savage.

Exactly in the same light do I view systems of evangelical truth.

God, except in a few instances, has not seen fit to throw his doctrines into any systematic arrangement. Acting under the influence of an all powerful principle of his constitution, man has found it necessary, for his own benefit, to arrange these truths, in systematic order; hence Catechisms for youth; and systems of divinity for the aid of students of Theology; and indeed, so useful are these, that were we without them, we would be constrained to make them; hence commentaries, paraphrases, annotations, &c. &c. which all good men, in all ages of the church, have esteemed as so useful; but which the clergymen of the no-creed system forbid to be used.—The arguments, which would conclude against the use of these, however, would, equally, against the use of any compend whatever.

Now the friends of the no-creed system have a great quarrel with us, because we use these in the education of our children, and that because, in so doing, we teach them our own creed. To an inquiry which I once made at one of the clergymen of this system, “how, upon your principle, will you give your children a religious education? how will you teach them divine truth?” it was replied that he would put the Bible into their hands, let them read and form their creed for themselves. At first sight this seems very plausible; but a moment’s consideration will satisfy you that this mode of procedure is a strange way of complying with that injunction, “*train up a child in the way he should go.*” To put the Bible into the hands of youth, and leave them to read and form their own creed, is, in my view, a strange sort of religious training, and communication of parental instruction. We all know how much Grammar and Geography a lad would learn, were we to content ourselves with merely putting the books into his hand, without coercing his attention, encouraging him to diligence, giving suitable explanations, and removing difficulties.

The friends of this system, however, stand ready, I presume, to declare that they would not leave their children without the necessary explanations—and I am disposed to think that they would not—but, if they would not, they contradict their own system. For let us suppose one of their children reading the Bible. He meets with a passage which he does not understand, and inquires of his parent, “what does this mean?” Will his parent say, I dare not tell you, because thus I would teach you my creed—you must find out for yourself? No, he would, I think, try to explain it as well as he could. But, in so doing, do you not perceive that while he proclaims himself a violent enemy to the use of creeds, lest he should teach his children the doctrines contained in them, he is teaching his children his *own* creed?

Is it not better, then, to have these truths systematically arranged,

with the proofs attached, so that our children may commit them to memory? Any one, who will take the trouble to test the two modes of procedure, will quickly find which is best calculated to make their children well acquainted with scripture truth. You must not suppose that, in this, I mean to exalt a catechism above the Bible. God forbid. I plead for it as a manual by which I may teach Bible truth.

How useful then are our manuals! What a rich legacy have those eminent men, who met at Westminster, bequeathed to the church! Men, compared with whom, for learning and talents, those who calumniate their labours, are as the glow-worm of night to the Sun in his mid-day glory. What! Did not these men, confessedly so illustrious for piety, and zeal for the glory of God, not know whether they had *authority* for what they did? Did they dream that they were forging a machine to produce, in the church, all the terrible effects attributed to Creeds and Confessions? Judge ye, from what you have heard, whose labours are likely to be most beneficial to the church, and acceptable to her Head,—whether those, whose tendency has been proved to be to prostrate the walls of Zion, or throw her doors wide, and make her a common for every unclean foot—or those, whose operation is, the maintenance of her laws, preservation of her discipline, promotion of her purity, education of her youth, and the preparation of her for that abode into which shall not enter any thing impure in either sentiment or practice.

I have now completed the contrast I proposed, and will, most cheerfully, leave it with any candid mind, to say which of these systems is best calculated to fulfil the will of Christ, for the maintenance of the church's purity. I have not the least doubt of the decision.

It is no more than what candour requires me to say, that I have no belief, that all the persons who have shewn themselves friendly to the no-creed system, in this country, were at all aware of the consequences to which it inevitably leads. I do think there are among them men of so much piety as to need no more than that it should be unveiled in all its "ugliness," most heartily to detest and forsake all connexion with it.

Carry home with you the argument upon which the whole discourse is founded. It is the sword of Goliath. There is none better. It is not mine. Any one who is not wilfully blinded can see it every where in the scriptures. If it be not scriptural, give it no entertainment. If it be, all that is correctly built upon it must stand. Do not suffer yourselves to be deceived by the wonderful pretensions of the no-creed system, to *liberality*—by the declarations of its friends that it is the only system, that secures *liberty of*

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*conscience.* O Liberty ! name dear to the bosom of every child of Jesus ! God knows how strenuously the advocates of Creeds and Confessions have contended for it, in lands which yet *smoke with their blood*, and echo with their *dying groans*, in its behalf. Too long have they loved it, now lightly to esteem it—too dearly have they purchased it, now lightly to relinquish it—and too well do they understand its nature, not to know, in this age of the world, when it is violated. What ! am I less a freeman of Jesus, because I submit to his laws—because I love the order and discipline of his church—and because, submitting to them myself, I oppose what I believe an attempt to trample them under foot, and introduce licentiousness ! O no, we are not slaves to the commandments of men ! We submit our consciences to no man or body of men. We bow to a “*THUS SAITH THE LORD,*” *alone.* We receive and subscribe Creeds and Confessions only so far as we believe them to be *agreeable to, and founded on, the Word of God* ; and we raise them aloft, that the world may see *how we understand the scriptures.* No ! God forbid, that we should *call any man master!*—but God forbid also, that we should ever fail to distinguish truth from falsehood, orthodoxy from error, and liberty from licentiousness !

I shall detain you, but a short time, with a brief attention to two or three of the objections, advanced by the opponents of Creeds and Confessions.

1. *Creeds and Confessions are in place of, and destroy respect for the Bible.*

My brethren, let facts refute this objection. There is nothing easier, than for you to satisfy yourselves, that the objection is not well founded. Enter the congregations of those who are most violent in their opposition to these Formularies, and number the Bibles in the hands of the worshipers. As the object of preaching is to explain Scripture, we, surely, ought to find the Book to be explained, in the hands of those who profess to attend upon its explication. But, to use the words of the Prophet Isaiah in reference to another subject, they are so few, “*that a child may write them.*” Is it so in the assemblies of those who are *most strongly attached to these Formularies*, and who make them, *really*, a term of communion ? I have seen both ; and, if we are warranted to judge from appearances, it is not hard to decide, which give the greatest indication of attachment to the Sacred Oracles.

Again. Enter the families of those who are most opposed to Creeds and Confessions, and tell me how many of the heads of those families are accustomed, morning and evening, on Lord’s-days and on week-days, to *read a portion of these scriptures*, and, with pray-

er and praise, commend themselves and their families, to the care of Divine Providence? Allow me once more to use the words of the prophet, they are so few, "*that a child may write them.*"—On the other hand, inspect the families of those who have received these Formularies from their ancestors, dyed in their blood,—who are most rigid in their adherence to them,—and shew me the head of a family that does not, when the morning light shines, collect his family, and *reading a portion of these Sacred Oracles*, with prayer and praise, commit himself and his family to the protection of the God of light and life!—Shew me the head of a family that, when the shades of evening lengthen o'er the earth, and the curtains of darkness are drawn around his habitation, does not assemble his family, and reading a portion of the Bible, with prayer and praise, commend himself and them to the care of that God "who slumbereth not nor sleepeth!" in the humble hope and confidence that He will protect them while they repose, and bring them safely to behold the opening glories of a new day.—Now, if a tree is to be judged by its fruits—if these *two systems* are to be tested by their fruits—methinks there will be little or no difficulty, in deciding upon the value of the objection to which we are replying. Most assuredly, I do think it is not those who make the most noise about the Bible, but those who are the most constant in the perusal of its sacred contents, that indicate the most love to it.—In a word, for the objection merits not any further notice, we would ask the objector, do you, in the management of your congregation, *apply* the Bible as your rule? Will you refuse us the right of *applying* it also? You indeed have the advantage of us. The *Eleusinian mysteries* were not more unknown to those who had not been initiated, than is the application which you may choose to make, or the explication which you may choose to give, of the laws under which you would censure any one, if indeed you can, in any way, upon your own principles, attempt to censure. Now in these Formularies we have, perhaps very unadvisedly, *published to the world our application* of the Bible to the exigencies of the church. Every member in our connexion, knows the principles upon which he is to be dealt with, as well as the officer whose duty it is to apply the law. This presents a barrier to spiritual tyranny. The difference, in this case, between the two systems, is, the no-creed system does not write and publish *its application* of the Scriptures to the management of the church, and thus favours despotism; whereas that of Creeds and Confessions does, and thus puts it out of the power of any church session to give an arbitrary decision.

Now I ask, is your *verbal* application in place of, and does it destroy respect for the Bible? Why then should our *written* one? Is it necessary that, when you *assert* that God's word prescribes such and such a course of procedure, recourse should be had to that

Word, to ascertain whether what you assert be true? You will scarcely deny this; unless saying "*I know I am right,*" is to decide the matter. Our Creeds and Confessions contain our application of the Redeemer's laws. Is it necessary to have recourse to his Word, to see that we are right? This we request to be done. Is not then the two systems, in this respect, upon an equality? If the latter system be in place of, and destroy respect for the Bible, so does the former. But there is a small item in which our system has far the advantage of yours. We direct the inquirer to the part of the Bible where he may find the law in question, and we say thus we understand and apply it. You are not so explicit.

2. *Creeds and Confessions contain propositions so abstract, that youth cannot understand them, therefore they should not be used.*

If this objection have weight, we ought not to put into the hands of youth, compends or systems of grammar or arithmetic; for confessedly, they contain propositions, to the full, as abstract as any of those contained in the Confession of Faith or the Catechisms. But we do not hesitate to place systems, of these and other sciences, in their hands, and send them to seminaries, for their instruction; and we expect the preceptor to explain to them that which they do not understand.

There are in the Bible propositions as abstract, and difficult to be understood, as any in our Creeds and Confessions. Let a youth, for instance, read the first chapter of John's Gospel. Have you ever seen a lad of ten or a dozen years of age, who understood, without previous explanation, the proposition in the first verse of that chapter, "*In the beginning was the Word?*" And is it not quite as easy to explain to him the meaning of, "man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever," as "*in the beginning was the Word?*" The objection therefore proves too much, and is, by consequence, good for nothing;—it sets aside the use of the *Bible* itself!

3. *Creeds and Confessions take passages of scripture out of their scriptural connexions, and so arrange them as to exhibit the views of those who made them.*

No, my brethren, we would not, for the world, take a passage of scripture out of its scriptural relations; for we too well remember that awful declaration, "*If any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life.*" We only quote passages from the Bible, and refer you to them, in those relations, that you may see that they prove that, for which they have been quoted.

How easily can we retort the objection upon those who make it ! You compose sermons, and take passages of scripture out of their scriptural relations, to prove your sentiments. Now this you do, and, using your own words, we say, “it becometh you to give the best of all reasons for so eccentric an adventure. Can you make truth more tangible?” Surely we may, not inappropriately, apply here the words of the Apostle to the Romans—“*Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art, that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself: for thou that judgest doest the same things.*”

The truth is, the advocates of the no-creed system profess to oppose Creeds and Confessions, and would have you to reject them also; while, at the same time, they preach to you their own Creed—labour to impress upon your minds their own peculiar principles, and *quote* scripture to prove them.

After all, how pitiful is this objection ! Do those who make it really mean to say, that we actually do *take* texts of scripture *out of* their place in the Bible? If so, it is sufficient, in this instance, to *deny* the allegation—*it is not true*. Perhaps they mean no more, for their words *are equivocal*, than that we *quote* texts from the Bible to prove the sentiments contained in our Creeds and Confessions? If so, we acknowledge it. But why object this to us? “*Thou that judgest doest the same things.*”

But, indeed, my hearers, I have no heart to pursue such objections any further. I have already trespassed too far upon your time. Besides, I fear to insult your understandings, by offering refutations of objections, none of which are of any more weight and importance than those which you have heard—objections which, I think, are not esteemed as of any real force, by those who offer them.—There is, however, one thing to which I wish to call your attention, before dismissing you for the day. I mean a publication which lately made its appearance in the public papers, entitled, *A conversation on persecution*. I would not notice this, were it not that it is calculated to make an impression on the unwary, and mislead the simple. You will bear with me a few moments, while I endeavour to analyze it, and shew you its real worth.

1. *This writer has made a definition of persecution to suit his own views.*

It runs thus—“*By persecution, I understand, every unkind word or action to others, on account of their differing from us in religious opinions or practices.*” I have examined the best Lexicographers of our language, for this definition of religious persecution, or for some-

thing like it, but without success. The fact is, no classical English author ever has used it in this sense. The writer of the piece under review, cannot therefore plead *authority* for this definition. It is *his own coinage*, and of right, ought to be subjected to the crucible, that its sterling value may be ascertained. I would do it thus—“*Every unkind word, &c. is persecution.*” An Arminian or Socinian will doubtless think it very *unkind*, that he should be called a *heretic*; and still more so, that he should be excluded from the church: But the Bible calls such heretics, and commands them to be excluded from the church: Therefore the Bible persecutes. All who like a definition which leads to such a conclusion, are heartily welcome to it for us. For our own part, we beg to be excused from adopting it. All the fabric raised upon *such* a foundation must fall with it.

2. *It denies the right of Christ's Ambassadors to make a Creed and require subscription to it, as a term of communion.* We have proved that they have this right.

3. *This writer is an enemy to systematic arrangement!* Yet his piece is an evidence against his principle. In it he has arranged his ideas in a certain order. If the writer of this piece were a preacher, we would ask him, whether he has ever found method useful in the composition of a discourse. If systematic arrangement is necessary in the exhibition of *divine truth* from the pulpit, I would wish to know why it is unnecessary when *that truth* is exhibited from the press. If it be a crime to systematize what I believe to be divine truth, in the form of a Creed, it is not less criminal, for the advocates of the no-creed system, of whom this writer is one, to arrange their views of it, in the form of a sermon. In one word, an enemy to systematic arrangement, is a person to be pitied, not to be reasoned with.

4. *This writer represents the friends of Creeds and Confessions, acting as if these formularies were INFALLIBLE.* They, so far as I know, have never either spoken or acted in such a manner as to justify this representation. Whatever in them is scriptural truth, they say is infallible. They require subscription to them only in so far as they are *agreeable to, and founded on, the Word of God.* Those who are cast out of the church for denying the doctrines of these Formularies, are so dealt with, not because they deny the doctrines of the *Confession of Faith*, but those of the *Bible*.

5. The following passage is contained in the piece under review. “In every church where a Confession of Faith is received, there are many who become members, not because of their love to this formula, but because of their desire to hear the gospel, and join at

the Lord's table, and they do not trouble themselves about the particular opinions of the society," &c. &c. What, do persons who really love the Bible, do this! What, "receive and subscribe" what they do not love!—"receive and subscribe, particular opinions," which they do not trouble themselves about! Those must have a very deep sense of morality indeed. The man who can receive and subscribe the Confession of Faith, without loving, and without troubling himself about, its doctrines (for these, of course, are the particular opinions of the society which makes it a term of communion,) and by consequence, *ignorantly*, is, I fear, neither a very *moral* man, nor a person *very fit* for a seat at the Lord's table. Is this a feature of the no-creed system? "Subscribe" the Confession of Faith, merely to get into the church, to scatter their poison, and disturb the peace of her members! But oaths are trifles, and subscriptions to constitutions mere scratches of the pen, if thereby an opportunity be gained of denouncing Creeds and Confessions. I much fear this writer tells the truth; and, from my soul, I pity the churches which have, in their bosoms, such members. After all, I would fondly cherish the idea, that there is, at least, *one church*, of which this charge is not true.

6. *This writer maintains the broad principle,—this indeed is the soul of the no-creed system,—that a profession of belief in the Bible is all that is necessary to communion in the church. My whole discourse has shewn the fallacy of this; I therefore need not now dwell upon it.*

7. *He maintains that Creeds and Confessions are the cause of persecution.* If his definition of persecution be correct, then, I confess, the session of this congregation would persecute, for it would be just so *unkind* as to cast out of communion persons who were heretical in their principles; and that too, although pleading their christian liberty. It would do this, because the Bible commands it to be done. I would not like to take ground which would force me to *charge God* with persecution. And, to be candid, I have no objection to be considered a persecutor, so long as I am *implicated, in the charge, with my Maker.*

I am willing to go so far as to grant, that there have been Creeds which really were, in their nature, persecuting—whose genuine tendency was, to harass with penalties; to pursue with malignity. The Roman Catholics maintained that it was right to burn heretics—that there was no salvation out of their church.—The Jesuits, that the end sanctified the means. We might easily multiply such creeds. These of necessity tend to persecution. But are they agreeable to, and founded on, the Bible? Can a persecuting principle be pointed out in *our subordinate standards*? Let us see it, and we will acknowledge and relinquish it.

A distinction ought to be made between that which is the *cause*, and that which is only the *occasion*—between the *use* and the *abuse* of a thing. That a sound Scriptural Creed—and such we maintain ours to be—has ever been the *cause* of persecution, we deny; that it may have been the *occasion*, we confess. The abuse of a thing is no good reason against its use. The Bible has been abused—it has been the occasion of much wickedness in the world; but *never the cause*. Shall we, therefore, lay aside the Bible?

Is the abuse of authority a good argument against it? Because, in the excellent, mild, and equitable government, under which we live, a magistrate may abuse the authority he possesses, for the oppression of the subject; is this a good reason why authority should be lodged no where? Because wicked and ungodly priests abused the power, conferred upon them by the Redeemer, to the making of an iniquitous and tyrannical Creed, and enforced it upon the conscience, by the thunders of the Vatican; the pains and penalties of the civil sword; the horrors of the dungeons of the Inquisition; and the terrible flames of an *Auto da Fe*; is this a good reason why the friends of the Redeemer should not employ the *power conferred upon them*, to the making of an evangelical creed, and requiring subscription to it, in order to the maintenance of the purity of the church?

We detest a persecuting Creed as much as any one can. We would not subscribe it. We would not ask admission into the church which had it. Nay, were we in the communion of such a church, we would not remain in it. A Luther, a Calvin, a Melancthon, a Zuinglius, would not. The advocates of the no-creed system would, for they have avowed it, at least one of them. They are welcome to their choice, and their liberality,—but let their lips be forever sealed in silence about a persecuting creed. For ourselves, before we would hold communion with the *Mystery of iniquity—that Wicked—whom the Lord shall consume with the Spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: Even him, whose coming is after the working of satan, with all power, and signs, and lying wonders; and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish—II. Thess. II. 7—9*, we would, imitating the example of the glorious and immortal LIGHTS of the reformation, and of the MARTYRS and CONFESSORS of Jesus in all ages, *men, “who had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover, of bonds and imprisonment: They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword; they wandered about in sheep-skins and goat-skins; being destitute, afflicted; tormented; (of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth?”—Heb. XI. 36—38*, we would, I say, as they did, kiss the

faggot, embrace the stake, and if God pleased, ascend to Heaven in a chariot of flame.——Let me now draw to a

### CONCLUSION.

Through the whole of the discourse, I can safely say, my desire has been to elicit truth and confound error. How far I have succeeded, is left to the candid and the pious to decide. I have not wilfully misrepresented any thing. Nor have I shunned to give my arguments all the point and force I could.

I reiterate—towards the gentlemen, whose opinions I have been opposing, I cherish respectful sentiments. Their system I view as one of the most dangerous and heretical, with which the church has, for a long time, been plagued. You cannot wonder, then, that I should feel it my duty to oppose it with all my powers. The ministers of Jesus are set for a “*defence of the gospel.*” They read, “*O son of man, I have set thee a WATCHMAN unto the house of Israel; therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and WARN THEM FROM ME.*” Their responsibility is awful—“*if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; BUT HIS BLOOD WILL I REQUIRE AT THINE HAND.*”—Ezek. xxxiii. Was the herald of the cross more strictly bound to duty, in the days of the Prophet Ezekiel, than at this day? May ministers of the gospel be more negligent now than then? Has the above threatening been repealed, or does it yet stand in force? Should they not take heed to themselves that *they* do not, and use every lawful exertion that *others* shall not, corrupt the pure streams of evangelical truth? while they read from the lips of the same inspired prophet—“*And as for you, O my flock, thus saith the LORD GOD: Behold, I judge between cattle and cattle, between the rams and the he-goats. Seemeth it a small thing unto you to have eaten up the good pasture, but ye must tread down with your feet the residue of your pastures? and to have drunk of the deep waters, but ye must foul the residue with your feet? And as for my flock, they eat that which ye have trodden with your feet; and they drink that which ye have fouled with your feet.*”—Ezek. xxxiv. 17—19. If ever there was a system which tended to do that which is stated in these verses, the no-creed system is that one.

Surely then it ought, nor can its friends have any objection that it should, be brought to the bar of Scripture and reason—be placed in the furnace. If it be all that which they would have us to believe, so far from being injured, it must come forth only the more bright and pure. In our standing forth in the *defence of Creeds and Confessions*, they ought to know, that if they have consciences in the attack, so have we, in the defence;—that, if zeal for the glory

of God carries them forward to the assault, the same zeal, we trust, animates us to the repulse.—With the motives of the friends of the no-creed system, we have nothing to do. I heartily concede to them pure motives and a vehement zeal ; but at the same time, I must say, that, in my opinion, the motive will not justify the procedure, and their zeal is a zeal “*not according to knowledge.*”

I cannot, in justice to myself and to you, dismiss you for the evening, without answering a question which probably is upon the lips of some. I divide you into two classes, those who favour the no-creed system, and those who remain attached to Creeds and Confessions. The question you ask is, “*what shall we do?*” To the friends of our subordinate standards, we say, “*hold fast that which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.*” Do not suffer yourselves to be deceived by that most false sentiment, “it is no matter what a man believes, if his heart be good.” What! Is it no matter what a man believes, while the Bible styles certain opinions, DOCTRINES OF DEVILS—I. Tim. iv. 1—while we read, “*if any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness?*” I. Tim. vi. 3. If it is no matter what a man believes, why does the Apostle enjoin it upon Timothy to “*hold fast the form of sound words?*”—why, concerning Hymeneus and Philetus, does he say, “*their words will eat as doth a canker,*” who concerning the TRUTH have ERRED, saying that the resurrection is past already ; and overthrow the faith of some?—II. Tim. ii. 17, 18. Why does he pronounce persons of certain opinions to be HERETICS ; command them to be cast out of the church ; and declare that they “*shall not inherit the kingdom of God?*” From such expressions as these, we surely may justly infer, that it is a matter of very considerable moment what a person believes.

I need not detain you long, with an exposure of the metaphysical absurdity contained in this sentiment. The human soul is a *unit*. It has powers of argumentation, of abstraction, reflection, recollection, &c. &c. It has affections—can love, hate, &c. When we say a person recollects, we mean that the whole soul is putting forth its energies in that mode of action. When we speak of a person as loving, we mean that the whole soul exercises that affection. Now, I would ask, what is meant, in this sentiment, by the heart? Does it mean the affections? It can mean nothing else. This sentiment then says, it is no matter what a man believes, if his *affections be good*—if they be *well regulated*—just as if this were possible—as if a man’s belief had no influence over his affections—as if a soul, corrupt in principle, could exercise a pure spiritual affection. For let us suppose that a man believes he may indulge himself in sensuality, is it not quite likely that his affections will be

inordinate and impure? The judgment influences the will—we *act* according to what we *believe* to be right. As then the mind is a *unit*, if its belief be impure, its affections will be impure, and the actions which flow from the belief, will be of the same character.— You must not then expect the affections to be good, while the judgment, which regulates them, is bad, unless it be true that an evil tree can bring forth good fruit, or a corrupt fountain send forth pure streams,

This sentiment is precisely the one which is common to Socinians and Deists, namely, “that principle itself is of no importance, in order to the enjoyment of the divine favour.” “It is no matter what a man believes, if his heart be good.” It is no matter what a man’s religious sentiments are, if he profess to believe the Bible. These two last sentiments involve the principle contained in the first.

To those who have embraced this system, I say, if you value your own soul’s salvation; if you respect the Head of the church, and the laws and regulations of his house; if you would not be convicted of destroying that which he is building; relinquish all connexion with this system. “*Come out from among them, and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.*”—“*Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.*”

Let us all pray, that the errors and heresies which so extensively prevail in the christian church, may soon vanish, before the all conquering power of DIVINE TRUTH, and unity and peace, upon the footing of EVANGELICAL PRINCIPLES, prevail. That the time may soon come, when there shall be “*One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all,*”—when “*the watchmen of Zion shall lift up the voice; with the voice together shall they sing: for they shall see eye to eye,*”—and all professing christians “*shall walk together, being agreed.*” God grant it. And to Him be glory, honour, and dominion, forever: AMEN.



## ERRATA.

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- PAGE 6th, last line of first paragraph—for “extirminating,” read *exterminating*.
- “ 18th, 21st and 22d—Spell the word “Armenians,” *Armenians*.
- “ 26th—23d line from the top, read the clause of the sentence in the plural—“It is a liberty for *persons*,” &c.