

prayers, for four years and a half, of an assembly of which it was said, by an historian, over two hundred years ago:—"The like of that assembly, as we have heard say, was never in England, nor anywhere likely shortly to be." And, to-day, we are still safe in saying, the like of it has not been for piety, learning, and patience; and the influence it has had in moulding the thought and life of the church wherever the English language is spoken. We hold, therefore, that the theologian of any school, who has not carefully read the Confession, ought not to be proud of his knowledge of the history of doctrine and of the church.

Apart from historic considerations, the intrinsic worth of the Confession is such that no Christian can afford to be ignorant of its contents.

1. It is *comprehensive*, including the whole circle of Bible teaching in a few pages.

Its introductory chapters treat of the authority of the Scriptures (including Canon, Inspiration, and Interpretation), and the attributes and sovereignty of God. It then begins where the Bible begins, and where all religious teaching naturally begins, with *Creation*, and ends where the Bible ends, with the coming of Christ to judge the world. The Decrees of God do not monopolize the Confession, as some have imagined. This subject occupies only one short chapter out of thirty-three. The remaining chapters treat of all the other great doctrines and classes of duties taught in the Bible; for example,—Providence, Christ the Mediator, Justification, Good Works, Assurance, Worship, the Church, the Civil Magistrate, Marriage.

It includes all the great points dealt with in any of the creeds or symbols of Christendom; and, consequently, the man who has mastered the Confession has a comprehensive view of the whole ground of Christian dogmatics and ethics.

2. The Confession is remarkably *Scriptural*, both in *substance* and in *language*.

Nothing is put in the Confession but what lies on the surface of Scripture. Where the Bible is not clear the Confession is silent.

For example: Presbyterians, generally, believe that all infants dying in infancy are saved, and the best and most comforting books on the question are written by Calvinists, yet these books are largely a gush of sentiment. The writers are not able to adduce clear Scriptural evidence on the question. And what says the Confession? Nothing. It is perfectly silent, as it is silent as to whether all idiots are saved or not. It tells us *how* infants, idiots, &c., are saved if God chooses (elects) to save them, but as to how many of them are saved the Confession says nothing, because the Bible is not express on the question.

Again, the Confession uses, largely, the very *words* of Scripture. A "fast" divine was railing at the teaching of the Confession on future rewards and punishments. To the amusement of others, but to his own confusion, he discovered that on this point the Confession simply used the clear, crisp phrases of the New Testament.

3. The Confession is *Catholic* in its spirit. Take the following: "Saints, by profession, are bound to maintain an holy fellowship and communion in the worship of God, and in performing such other spiritual services as tend to their mutual edification; as also in relieving each other in outward things according to their several abilities and necessities, which communion, as God offereth opportunity, is to be extended unto all those who in every place call upon the name of the Lord Jesus." This *binds* us to worship and commune with God's people of every name when opportunity offers, and to give them of our money if need be. And, Presbyterians as a rule, take the lead in Catholicity, as witness the many large non-denominational charities of this city, built by Presbyterian money and now run by others. But are Presby-

terians abreast of the Confession in this matter? Not quite. And it will be found that not only in this matter, but in most things the Confession is not only abreast of the age but ahead of it. Our ministers and elders, almost to a man, feel this instinctively when any one attempts to tamper with the Confession. True, there are exceptions. An English divine says that parts of the Confession are not believed by even good members, and he is in favor of the church forming a new and much shorter symbol to which all our adherents might say, "Credo." Indeed! He forgets who some of our adherents are. We protest against making a creed to suit the opinions of all who may be adherents. Our Confession is to be determined by the Word of God, and let those adhere who will.

### The Stand Point of Apologetics.

IN Christian apologetics two classes should be kept in view—believers and unbelievers—the one to be strengthened and established, the other to be silenced or brought to the knowledge of the truth. Most essential it is in dealing with both to assume the right stand-point, and to define precisely what we maintain and defend. And what we require from ourselves we have a right to demand from the enemy—clear definition. Men who hate the truth, we are told on the highest authority, "love darkness." In our day many delight in *fog*, and it should never be forgotten that this is far more difficult to illuminate than perfect darkness. Nothing more, however, is often needed to expose the weakness and folly of these lovers of fog than to bring them to sharp definition—oblige them to speak out in plain terse English what they are incoherently raving about, and they are sufficiently answered. And if this is not enough cause them to pass on from negations to something positive, from destruction to construction. Instead of perpetually telling us what they *do not and cannot believe* let us hear what they *do believe*. If Christ and Christianity are to be rejected, what are we to have instead of them? It is usually necessary also to inform these dashing critics that there are a hundred religious follies which we are in no way bound or inclined to defend. We do not homologate all the curious creeds and arguments advanced from the days of Christ to the dawn of 1883. Every age should live and move for itself and for posterity rather than for the past. We should deal with living issues instead of doting upon antiquity. A statement may no more be true because it is old than because it is new. The errors of our ancestors are no more to be spared than those of our children. And it is certainly no part of the Christian apologist's work to justify the imperfect conduct of Old Testament or New Testament saints. Their sins should be treated as sins and utterly indefensible. This is God's method. The follies of David and Solomon and Peter are no more sanctioned by Him than the malice of Jezebel or the treachery of Judas Iscariot. And modern frauds and shams need look for no shelter or protection from the true defenders of the faith. When earnest men of any school of thought demand the overthrow of stately insincerities or hoary superstitions found in Church or State it is not our business to prop them up. Let them fall and perish forever by the hand of the destroyer.

Nor is it the work of the apologist to defend mere abstractions—the metaphysical subtleties of the schools and of the middle ages. What he is mainly called to do is to hold forth the Christ of God, to maintain his honor and glory. Let him take his stand by the cross and there he is mighty and triumphant. Men may quarrel with the Bible as an abstract revelation. They may apply to every page, every chapter and line of it what they are pleased to call "Higher criticism," they may in the most critical and sceptical spirit investigate all about the origin and history of the several