

solemn and interesting, and much calculated to make a deep and lasting impression on those who witnessed them. When the work of the day was over, Mr. Wilson, on returning home, went directly to his study, tired and worn out with his anxieties and exertions. Isabella—his eldest daughter, then but twelve years of age, but who, attended by one of the servants, had witnessed the whole extraordinary scene—a scene which she distinctly remembered as long as she lived, and often mentioned to her family with the deepest interest—felt very anxious to understand from her father the meaning of what had taken place, but not liking to ask him, she hung about the door of his apartment, till he observed her, and perceived what were her feelings and wishes. He then called her, and said—“Bell! this has been a day of trial, but we have reason to be thankful that it has not been a day of shame. If any one ask you, Bell, why your father lost his kirk! you may just say, as good Mr. Guthrie, before his death, directed my mother to say of him, if she were asked why he lost his head—that it was in a good cause.”*

We have thus taken notice of the immediate results of the deliverance of the Assembly in 1740, as empowering the civil authorities to exclude the ministers of the Associate Presbytery from their churches. We only add at present, that neither their respectability as gentlemen, nor their usefulness as ministers, was diminished by these occurrences in Providence. Their spheres of usefulness were rather enlarged; for many who were lamenting the defection of the times, went to them from the surrounding parishes, and joined their congregations. This much more than made up for the loss of those of their own parishes who remained in the establishment.

(To be continued.)

A DEFENCE OF CREEDS.

It is customary, at the present day, to accuse Presbyterians of putting the Confession of Faith in the same position in which Roman Catholics place tradition, as a rule of faith beside the word of God, and in many respects superior to it—and then we are reminded, in the words of Chillingworth: “The Bible, and the Bible alone is the religion of Protestants.” Such statements are, however, gross misrepresentations; since all Presbyterians regard the Bible, not only as the supreme, but the only standard of faith and practice; while the Confession of Faith is only their explanation of the sense in which the Scriptures are to be understood. Thus in the United Presbyterian Church, the first two questions put to candidates for ordination to the ministry are:—1. “Do you believe the Scriptures of the Old and new Testaments to be the Word of God, and the only rule of faith and practice? 2. Do you acknowledge the Westminster Confession of Faith, and the Larger and Shorter Catechisms, as an exhibition of the sense in which you understand the Holy Scriptures; it being understood that you are not required to approve of anything in these documents which teaches, or is supposed to teach, compulsory or persecuting, and intolerant principles in religion.” But is not the Word of God, it has been asked, amply sufficient, without either note or comment? We shall test the force of this objection by an actual case. In the primitive Church, Arius, a presbyter of Alexandria, maintained that Christ was a creature, created before time began, above angels, but not equal to God. Constantine, the first Christian Emperor, convened a Council of Bishops at Nice, to decide what had been the faith of the Church on this fundamental doctrine. The Arians were condemned, and a creed was drawn up embodying the views of the orthodox party—that is, stating the sense in which they understood the Scriptures. The Arians spoke of Christ in the sublimest language, and they attributed to him every moral excellence, short of the ascription of supreme divinity, and hence the unreflecting might suppose that there was no difference between them and the orthodox. Did Athanasius, the leader of the Trinitarians, assert that Christ was God? The Arians admitted it; but it was in the same sense in which angels and men are, in Scripture, called gods. Was it asserted that Christ was of God? It was granted; but then we are of God, of

whom are all things. Was it affirmed that the Son was the wisdom, power, and image of the Father? Granted, said Arius, for we are also said to be the image and glory of God. The orthodox, to avoid such dishonest shifting, inserted in the Nicene Creed that the Son is of the same substance with the Father; while the Arians would only admit that he was of a similar substance; and as the two phrases only differ in Greek by a single letter, or rather aspirate, the discussion furnished Gibbon with a silly sneer against Christianity. Now, what would our modern declaimers against creeds have done in this case? Would they have drawn up a Confession of Faith entirely in Scripture language, and have thus sanctioned the virtual overthrow of the gospel? Or would they, like the Nicene fathers, have inserted such language as would have fixed the sense in which their opponents understood the Scripture? We suppose they would have preferred the latter.

The controversy about creeds is quite of modern growth; and it seems to have chiefly arisen from confounding two very different questions:—Ought there to be a creed at all? and if so, what should that creed contain? Hence the Assembly which composed the Westminster Confession of Faith, was made up of Presbyterians, Congregationalists, and a few Episcopalians; who all agreed that a Confession was necessary. There was also a remarkable agreement on the doctrinal part of the Confession, only two points having been tabled, the one on the question of reprobation, the other on the active and passive obedience of Christ; but when they were discussing the subject of Church Government, this unanimity completely vanished. And we in modern times, the Scotch Independents, who usually disclaim the authority of written creeds, can occasionally recognize them; for when a number of Congregational churches in the neighbourhood of Glasgow embraced new views respecting the Spirit's influence, Dr. Wardlaw, with some others, in a semi-official pamphlet reminded them, that this belief was opposed to what was most surely believed among them—a sentiment which implies the existence of a permanent creed, if not written, yet understood.

But it is more than probable that creeds, suited to the times, were used in the Apostolic Church, and that they are referred to in Paul's epistles. Thus Paul addresses Timothy, “I hold fast the form of sound words which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.”—2nd Timothy, i. 13, 14. Timothy is commanded to hold fast not only sound words, but the form of sound words; implying the existence of a form which required to be adhered to. This form could not be Paul's previous instruction; for the word rendered form denotes the sketch, or outline of a picture; a word fitly describing a creed as an outline of Christian doctrine. The Apostle addresses the Romans in similar language. “But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you.” Romans, vi. 17. Where the word form might be rendered type, that is, rough sketch, or outline. In proof that short creeds were used in the Apostolic Church, an appeal has been also made to Galatians, vi. 16. “And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and on the Israel of God.” The word rule is literally translated canon, and denotes a formal, authoritative rule. It is here only incidentally referred to; but it seems to have been so well known as not to require any formal description.

These passages afford high probable evidence that short creeds were in use during the Apostolic age. There is another, however, of rather difficult interpretation, that seems to contain an allusion to the same practice. 1st Corinthians, xv. 29: “What shall they do who are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the dead?” Some think that reference is made, in this passage, to a very prevalent custom in the primitive church, when a person died unbaptized, for another individual to be baptized in his stead. But we have no evidence that such a superstitious custom existed in the Apostolic age; and if it had, they would never have sanctioned a practice which asserted the necessity of baptism to salvation, and have thus virtually undermined the spirituality of the gospel. The easiest exposition of this rather difficult passage is, that it is to be understood elliptically, and should be read thus:—“What shall they do who are baptized in the hope of the resurrection of the dead, if the dead rise not?” A reference is thus made to those creeds to which believers gave their assent at baptism. But if every individual wrote a creed for himself, as is done in Congregational churches, there would be too little uniformity to enable any one to found a general appeal on them;

* Isabella Ramsay, Mr. Wilson's mother, was a niece of Mrs. Guthrie, wife of the Rev. James Guthrie of Stirling, the distinguished martyr at the beginning of the persecution under Charles II., and had been adopted by her uncle and aunt, after being disowned and disinherited by her own father, (a baptized Episcopalian) for embracing the Presbyterian religion. (See No. II. of the Canadian Presbyterian Magazine.)