

treated, rendered it only a matter of justice to present the other side of the case. But I have not occupied so much space merely for any controversial purpose, but because it gave an opportunity of exhibiting the working of different schemes. Still I should much rather have been engaged in consultation with brethren holding different views, comparing different modes of working, endeavouring to learn from the experience of other bodies, and helping to devise a scheme suited to our condition. I also regret that what I have written may appear depreciatory of the Free Church. I have no desire to exalt one Church above another. I appreciate the efforts of that body as sincerely as those who cannot see anything beyond it. In the matter of ministerial support, she has taken the lead among the Churches of Britain. Her rich congregations have shewn a liberality in this matter unsurpassed. I do not know that it has been equalled anywhere, and it was by the stimulus of their example that the United Presbyterian Church was led to the efforts by which she has reached her present position in this matter. And I believe that we can learn much from the study of her plans, and especially the modes in which they are worked out. In shewing that the United Presbyterian Church had raised the standard of ministerial support to a higher level than that of the Free Church, I only stated what has been declared by the leading men of the latter. Like wise men, instead of denying or explaining away the fact, they urge it as an argument to stimulate the members of the Free Church to greater exertions. As to the United Presbyterian Church, again, I readily admit that she had one great advantage. Her members, however poor, had always been trained to giving. Still I believe that the manner in which she has developed the spirit of self-support among her weak congregations, is as worthy of admiration as the splendid liberality of the wealthy congregations of the Free Church and as important for us to consider in framing our plans. Should I not be regarded as occupying too much space, sometime I may further discuss some of these matters, not in any controversial way however.

GEORGE PATTERSON.

AN OLD-SCHOOL PRESBYTERIAN'S OPINIONS ABOUT CREEDS OR CONFESSIONS.

1. A creed or confession, I take to be, *that interpretation of the Holy Scriptures, which I or any other man believes to be really the correct one*; this interpretation is my creed, as I believe it, and my confession, as I declare it to others.

2. *Some Christians would have no creeds or confessions at all.* You ask what is their creed, and with an air of uncommon wisdom and goodness, the preacher hands you a copy of the New Testament and immediately begins to preach. "Very good," you say, "but very inconsistent. I expected you merely to read, but the moment you begin to preach, you begin to interpret the Scriptures, and that interpretation of yours is your creed or confession."

Some people think they can avoid creeds by getting what they call the pure Bible into their heads. The truth is, no man can, in any case, get any more of the pure Bible into his head than just his own interpretation of it, and that interpretation is his creed or confession. Where is the advantage? The creed is there, and the inconsistency with it.

3. *Some Christians would have no written creed or confession.* If I believe my interpretation of Scripture to be correct, then honesty and zeal in Christ's cause would naturally lead me to have it published and well understood by all the members of the Church. What reason should prevent me from doing so, unless I have a fear that the members of my Church may follow me up, and find out what my creed is, or perhaps detect heterodoxy in it? I do not, however, suppose such Christians to have fears of this kind; for very many of them publish their sermons. O inconsistency! They call out against written creeds, and yet publish their creeds in written sermons.

4. *Some Christians say the Lord never intended creeds to be used in the Church.* Then, I wonder, why He commanded His servants to preach, for a man cannot preach without preaching his creed.

5. *Some Christians would go in for a very short or broad creed.* Short here, to me, means broad. Men now-a-days are not likely to devote very much study to a creed; and, therefore, there can be no advantage in shortening a creed, unless what is taken from the

length go to the breadth; and this may be done with elastic ideas, as well as with elastic substances.

In short, these Christians say, "a creed should be broad enough to admit, as members of the same church, all evangelical Christians"—this would mean Baptists and Presbyterians, Arminians and Calvinists—for all of these are evangelical. Very well, nothing that was disputed on, could get a place in the creed of that church. As the Baptist and Presbyterian cannot agree about baptism—baptism could neither be preached nor administered. As the Arminian and the Calvinist cannot agree about the parts which God and man perform in the work of salvation, nothing could be preached about the parts which either might perform. And as to government—in a congregation made up of evangelical Presbyterians, Congregationalists, and Anglicans, there could be no government whatever, but that of "each man doing what was right in his own eyes." A queer church it would be—a lady with seven heads under one crown, the creed of outward unity, only, unlike the scarlet lady, she would be harmless and kind.

Then, how could such a congregation agree in calling a pastor, unless every man ignore his own peculiar tenets (which to him would be ignoring some part of the Word of God)? The man of their choice must be a Baptist, Presbyterian, Arminian, and Calvinist, all in one—a clerical contradiction and monstrosity. Then as to the pastor and his work after his settlement, his mind would require to have as many hues as the chameleon, and every sermon to be like Joseph's coat of many colours.

6. *A church with a definite, lengthy, written or well understood scriptural creed, like our own, is the only one in which all the members of the congregation can be edified or work harmoniously together.* They all agree mainly in their doctrinal ideas; and so the sermon that edifies one, edifies all. The pastor is in full harmony with their scriptural creed, and so is in harmony with his people in doctrine, worship, government or discipline. "They all with one mind and one mouth glorify God," in accordance with the apostolic injunction.—Rom. xv. 6.

OBJECTIONS TO CREEDS.

1. *They make people narrow and decided or dogmatic in their views of the truth.* Well, truth is a very narrow thing; "white is white, and not white and gray." The greater knowledge we get of a thing, the more definite and narrow our opinions about it become. When I know a thing to be black or gray, my knowledge is not very definite; but when I have found out the thing to be only black, then my views respecting it are narrow, definite, and dogmatic. Narrowness of this kind is not a bad thing.

2. *Creeds lead to great discussions in the Church.* Then supposing they do, discussion is a very good thing when properly used. Discussion and conference are two of the best highways to the discovery and apprehension of truth. Discussion is reckoned a splendid and most useful thing in science, politics, and law, why should it not be a good thing in religion? I wonder why some people in meek horror turn up their eyes at the idea of discussions in religion. Discussion is one of the very best means of agitating the ideas and presenting to the mind the various phases of truth whereby our knowledge grows; and as young minds are continually coming into the world, and have all to learn that their seniors learned before them, to refuse them the right of discussion would be to refuse them one of the best means of attaining their end.

3. *But religious discussions lead to ill-feeling.* Never, when parties are concerned only in finding out the truth. If human pride is in the way, it may be bumped a little; but ill-feeling does not theoretically follow discussion; and it need not do so practically. We have all seen again and again the most lively discussion in a Presbytery meeting, and yet all parties shake hands heartily at the close.

4. *But creeds are man-made.* If so, sermons are also man-made; nevertheless they are preached by divine authority. Yea, and printed too, else all denominations have made a mistake; therefore creeds which are sermons of doctrine have divine authority. Some decry creeds "because," they say, "they are but man's interpretation to the Word of God," so they go for the pure truth to the Word of God, and think they have got at something better than a man's interpretation. They forget that, at the utmost, they can only get at their own interpretation which is but a man's—and that thing which they despise, a creed.

Therefore all of the pure truth that a man can get at in any case, is but that which is contained in his own interpretation or creed.

5. *Creeds grow.* Truth does not grow; and a creed that correctly reflects the truth will not grow either—any more than an image reflected in a mirror will grow, except the object it represents grow also. If creeds can properly grow in any sense, it will be in the minuteness, accuracy, and clearness with which they represent the truth; but then this would be growth in a direction which the objectors to long creeds do not like.

6. *But creeds are a barrier to Christian fellowship between different denominations.* As already shewn, we cannot get quit of creeds, unless we get quit of interpretations. How then may creeds be made the least barrier? By uniting as many Christians as think alike in one church, under one creed, creeds become not a barrier, but a bond, not a curse, but a blessing. As to fellowship between different denominations, different creeds need no more disturb it, than different shades of political opinion disturb fellowship between different ladies of Her Majesty's loyal subjects.

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ALEX. NICOL.

MARRIAGE WITH A DECEASED WIFE'S SISTER.

MR. EDITOR, In my former letter I adduced part of the proof that marriage with a mother's brother's wife is directly prohibited in Scripture, and that it is not fair to claim that marriage as one of a list of inferential additions to the Mosaic statute. The longer the list of inferential additions can be made to appear, the more presumptive evidence there will be that marriage with a deceased wife's sister is to be understood as prohibited by implication; and the smaller the dimensions to which such a list can be reduced, the less probability remains in favour of holding such marriage prohibited. I pointed out that marriage with a father's brother's wife is prohibited, and that the ground on which it is prohibited is "She is thine aunt," and that, therefore, every aunt comes under this prohibition, not as a matter of inference, but as directly as it was possible for legislation to provide. But if all this will not satisfy those with whom I am reasoning, then let me adduce another form of proof, and point out that in Lev. xx. 20, alliance with an "uncle's wife" is forbidden in as express positive terms as could be used; but a man's mother's brother's wife is his uncle's wife. If so, then with what show of reason can this marriage be paraded as one that must be put in a list of inferential additions? We thus strike out of such a list marriage between a father and daughter, and marriage between a nephew and aunt, and reckon both these as positively and expressly forbidden.

However, I do not think the position a sound one that no marriage alliance should be regarded unscriptural unless it is expressly mentioned in the prohibited list. The marriage of uncle and niece is not mentioned, but I can see no reason why such a marriage should be held to be permitted, when that of nephew and aunt is prohibited. The relationship is precisely the same in each case, and the nearness of relationship simply is that which is made the ground of prohibition. In the one case the measurement is backwards in the genealogical table, in the other it is forward over the very same space. But in like manner it is contended that the relationship between a widower and the wife of his deceased brother, is precisely the same as that between the same widower and the sister of his deceased wife. That Scripture does not view the one relation as identical with or equivalent to the other is proved by the following facts, viz., in no circumstances was a Jew enjoined to marry the latter woman, whereas he had no choice in certain circumstances but to marry the former or be disgraced; in other circumstances his taking her is branded as an "unclean thing," whereas, when polygamy was tolerated, though never approved, the strongest objection taken to his marrying the second sister, even while the first was living, is based on considerations of vexation, and not of moral turpitude.

I do not, in conclusion, profess to be absolutely free from all difficulty or doubt; but it is not the manner of the Bible to leave a great moral question to rest on grounds so remote and obscure as those on which the alleged prohibition in this case is said to rest. The argument for it, appears to me strained and inconclusive; the opposite view may not be quite free from difficulty also. But more than a doubt is required as