

This absolute need of organization, which is the true idea of the church, has given rise to the Y. P. S. C. E. It is not an organization outside, or apart from the church, but is in the church, because it is an organization. It is a society of living, active, united Christians; and this is, as we have already shown, the correct idea of the church, or body of Christ. Let there be church organization, as there should be, and then the church would be an Endeavor Society. Gideon had too many men, i. e., too many of the kind; so he tried them, and shifted them till he got a number who were true, and united, and ready to work together. The rest he sent home. It may not be necessary to call those three hundred men, "Gideon's Band," yet it is true all the same. We may not see the need of calling any number of Christians who band themselves together, and unitedly, and mutually work to build up the cause of Christ, an "Endeavor Society," but this is just what it really is. The Church of Christ is a Christian Endeavor Society, when it is organized, and if not organized, it should not be called a church. We look at the condition of the churches, and then look out upon the fields, already ripe for the harvest, and we are impressed, if not depressed, with the magnitude of the work, and the imperative need of organized, systematic labor. We know that nothing but organized effort can accomplish the work. Three hundred men, all workers, and united, were enough for Gideon to accomplish his mission, but thirty thousand men were too many when not workers. The dead branch, or inactive member, is a positive injury and block to the wheel of success, and should not be counted in "Gideon's Band." This is the principle of the "Busy workers," or "Happy toilers," etc., that none shall be in the number who are not workers together with them. Is this not the idea of the church? And can there be success until this organized effort is established? H. M.

THE CREED FOR WHICH CHRIST DIED.

Text: "The Jews answered him, we have a law, and by our law He ought to die because He made himself the Son of God." John xix. 7.

Many have died in martyrdom for Christ; Christ died in martyrdom for himself. He spoke the truth; He said, I am the Son of God. They said, you are a blasphemer, and you shall die. Jesus was true to His divine mission, but that was displeasing to the Jews, and so they crucified Him. He did his Father's will, refusing to do theirs, knowing well that they were braiding a crown of thorns. He might have taken the easy, plausible, complimentary way; He might have been conventional, pleasing the times, serving Satan, seeking a throne like David's or Solomon's or Caesar's. Indeed He had the offer of the world and its kingdoms for worshipping Satan. The offer is not an "allegory;" it is literal. Jesus might have had the world for worshipping Satan in Caesar's or Napoleon's way. However, He chose love instead of hatred; mercy instead of cruelty; forgiveness instead of retaliation; truth instead of falsehood; the healing instead of the hurting of men; set the pulpit against the sword; baptisms of repentance and forgiveness against baptisms of blood,—and for all this He died.

If He was the Son of God all this was right, and in it the Jews had God's rebuke for their wicked worldly ways. If He was an imposter they were right, and might with God's sanction keep to their own sweet will about things. There was no final test of the matter but for them to kill Jesus; they could not be true to himself without dying if they demanded it. How else could He practice the love and forgiveness and mercy that He had preached? If on the cross Jesus had not have prayed as He did He would not have been true to the Sermon on

the Mount; if at their demand He had not have died He would have been an imposter. In death He conquered; His enemies were defeated; three thousand of them confessed it on Pentecost.

The creed for which Christ died was therefore, His life, His truth, His love, His mercy, Himself. Having preached and lived as He did, consistency compelled Him to die as He did. In this sense He died for Himself; He is His own creed; He is the Son of God; He is right.

The creed for which Christ died is the one for which we should live.

1st. Because it is final,—rather, let us say because He is final. Is God infinite? Can we improve on the infinite? Can we make a better creed than God's own Son? We speak of Christ as the perfection of manhood; as "Man at his climax;" as "The moral miracle of history;" as "The mightiest among the holy; and the holiest among the mighty of all the earth;" we declare him to be "The fulfillment of prophecy;" "The Son of man;" "The Son God;" "The King of kings, and Lord of lords;" "The Redeemer;" "The Saviour;" we affirm that never man spoke, wrought, lived, died, and arose from the dead as Jesus did; we accept Him as "The word made flesh," and then immediately we proceed to shelve him, (as though our words had been but flattery and mockery) while we go about the construction of a "Nicene creed," or an "Athanasian creed," or a "Calvinistic creed," or an "Arminian creed," or a "Westminster creed," or "The Thirty-nine Articles," or a "Reformed Symbol," or a "Manual of belief," or a "Confession of faith," or an "Anti-organ Article," the last being the smallest the most insane substitution for Christ ever dreamed of by mortal man since the days of the invention of the pyx and chasuble and rosary.

The apostolic church received Christ as final. The New Testament Christians knew no other creed than Christ. Even the "Apostles' Creed" was not formulated till after the apostles had all passed away. And the dogma of verbal inspiration was unknown to them. Thomas cried, "My Lord and my God!" That was his creed. Phillip preached Jesus to the Ethiopian. Paul "opened and alleged that Jesus was the Christ." Peter proved that He had arisen from the dead, and cried passionately that "God had made Him both Lord and Christ." The apostle John declared Him to be "The Word made flesh, dwelling among us, showing us His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." Beyond Jesus the apostles never tried to go. They sought for no stars while the sun shone in their mid-heavens. To them He was the all in all; the representative of God; the "express image of God." They said "God was in Him reconciling the world to himself." Every creed is a misconception of Christ and a degradation of his mission. He did not die for our theories, or our theologies, or our "isms." We might say rather that His death was intended to put an end to swords and clubs and dogmas, and set men in the harmony of a holy brotherhood to work for one another and the world. He is final as the sun in the sky is final. We, sporting our creeds, are like children marching with torches in broad day-light.

Since Christ is final we cannot as His followers make anything a test of fellowship that is not embodied in Him. For example: we know that love is embodied in Christ; then if Christ is orthodox he who loves is likewise orthodox; he who hates is a heretic. So of truth; the liar is a heretic. So of mercy; the cruel man, the man who applies the thumb-screws, is the heretic. On the other hand we do not know that the Nicene Creed is embodied in Christ; He and His apostles are silent about it, therefore one might either accept it or reject it and still be orthodox. It is a matter, may be, of science, or philosophy, or opinion. One has the same liberty about it that he has about botany, or geology,

or politics. So with the "organ question;" we have the same liberty about it that we have about eating frogs or pork; Christ says nothing. But the moment we begin to dogmatize about the Nicene creed, or the organ in worship, or frogs' hams on our table, and fall to abusing one another, and strive to make such things tests of fellowship, then we are heretics, both parties of us if we both get angry and hateful. He who abuses his brother with club or creed is not orthodox. Let us remember that Christ is final, and that we should neither add to His words nor quarrel over His silences.

2nd. The finality of this creed suggests the futility of other creeds. Judaism was a useful though imperfect system, for Christ had not yet come, and it led toward Him. So, may be, of Greek and Roman history, with their varied philosophies and politics, and with Buddhism and Confucianism. Shadows, types, pedagogues, leading to Christ. "Christ being come we are no longer under a pedagogue." Why then should we trouble ourselves to manufacture systems, having so been freed from them? It is doubtful if Calvinism is much better than Buddhism. At best the Westminster Confession has to be revised now and then to bring it down to date, or hurry it up with the times. We do not revise Christ. We do our best to tell of Him in words and deeds, and at last we say, "the half has not been told."

The futility of human creeds is seen, therefore, both in their limitations and their periodical reshaping. But again, it is seen in their failure to do what they were intended to do. They are intended to keep the church united and its faith pure. They have split the church into hundreds of fragments, and mingled with its sublime and simple faith a thousand errors, extravagances, and limitations. There is no creed that will restrain a brave and brainy man. Trinitarianism so far from whipping every body in will drive somebody into Unitarianism, and we are quite as likely to meet William E. Channing in heaven as Athanasius himself. Calvinism incites to Arminianism, just as a brimstone hell begets Universalism. Extremes beget each other. The old superstitious views of the Bible are goading Prof. Briggs to what his brethren think are extreme views. Today Presbyterians may be found who differ from each other more widely than Presbyterianism itself differs from Congregationalism, or even from Baptistism. And so all round. Dr. Burrel, formerly of Minneapolis, now of New York, at the laying of the corner stone of the St. Andrew Presbyterian church in Minneapolis, quoted Peter's words to Jesus; "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," and affirmed with the emphasis of repetition that "that ought to be the universal creed of the universal church." If it had have been a Methodist meeting I would have shouted.

If from all the lamentable history of human creeds we succeed at last in getting the lesson of their uselessness and even mischievousness then we will have made the only legitimate use of them. When by a thousand experiments we learn that arsenic is really poison, and not food, and when we conclude finally to let it alone, then our experiments are turned to good account, though we did untold mischief by them.

The creed for which Christ died is the one for which we should live if we love Him. Christ the Son of God! His blood is that truth. Remember the text; the Jews said, "We have a law, and by our law He ought to die because He made Himself the Son of God." Loyalty to that truth is loyalty to the blood of Jesus. He who died for us and rose again said "all authority in heaven and on earth is given to me."

"Our Friend, our Brother and our Lord,
What shall thy service be?
Nor name nor form nor written word,
But simply follow thee."

W. J. LHAMON.

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