

ance of the Divine Spirit ; they possess an astonishing coincidence, which reflects much credit upon each other, and tends to strengthen the authority of each other. It is also a remarkable fact, tending to strengthen the authority of the Westminster confession of faith, that although Two Centuries have elapsed since its compilation, and although many powerful, erudite and pious minds have spent their life time in the study of the Scriptures, and on comparing this formulary of doctrine with them, yet no demand has ever been made for a new compilation, or even a revision of it ; nor is such a demand likely to be soon made.

Those associations that have adopted a constitution somewhat different from the Presbyterian, seem to have borrowed chiefly from this formulary. Individual Teachers may spring up, inculcating contrary doctrines ; but what is their authority in comparison of that of the Westminster Confession of Faith ? it is merely individual authority against the many who were engaged in the compilation of this book, and against the many more, who, having spent their lives in the investigation of the truths of the Bible, have left their assent to it,—a mere straw in comparison of a mass of authorities.

Do not Creeds and Confessions fetter the minds of men, and prevent them from teaching the truth ? By no means. They guide men into the knowledge of the truth, and prevent them from falling into error ; and although implicit confidence is not due to them, yet they are as good guides as the church can furnish ; those who pretend to be wiser than the Church's formularies are frequently found to be wise only in their own conceit ; the Teachers of new doctrines, and the founders of new associations ought justly to be regarded with great suspicion.

But would it not be more liberal to lay aside the use of such compends of doctrine ?

Would it be liberal, to have ill defined and confused ideas of the object to be accomplished by the Church of Christ as an association ? to have indistinct views of the plan of her operations and to be ignorant of her constitution ? what advantage could result to the church from having no bond of union ; if this would be liberality, it would not, certainly, be wisdom.

But that the Church of Christ, or any section of it, cannot dispense with such compends of doctrine, appears from the practice of those, who have declaimed most loudly against them. The Congregationalists of England, and those of Canada, have published a summary of principles, and also a catechism ; and it is really pitiful to see them thus declaring the necessity of such compends of truth or exhibitions of their principles and yet denying that they have any authority amongst them. Those, who call themselves Baptists, have also their summaries of principles ; the Close Communion Baptists of this country a few years ago published a confession of their faith, drawn up by their conference at Ancaster, and which is almost an abridgement of the Westminster confession of faith.