

By no means. These books uniformly assert the supremacy of the Bible as a standard of truth ; and appeal to it for every doctrine they advance. Nor is there any indistinctness or defect in the Bible ; the fault lies in the minds of men, who are frequently unsuccessful in their investigation of the truth, because under the influence of prejudice, or human wisdom or learning, or in want of spiritual illumination, (1 Cor. ii. 14.) and though it is not pretended that they are perfect, yet, being the result of patient research, and of the collective wisdom and experience of the church, they are as perfect as any human compilation can be expected to be.

What relation do these formularies bear to the Bible? The Bible is God's testimony to the world ; Creeds and Confessions are the Church's testimony regarding herself : the Bible is the supreme law of the Church ; these formularies are the received interpretation of that law adopted by the Church : the Bible is inspired ; they are not : the Bible is of Divine authority ; their authority is merely human : the Bible is perfect and infallible ; they, being human compilations, are not perfect, nor infallible : the Bible admits of no amendment ; they may be amended and improved : the Bible is the supreme standard of truth ; they are subordinate to it, and in proportion as they coincide with it, they approach to perfection : the Bible is the golden mine of divine truth ; they are helps to unlock its treasures : the Bible is the bond of union for the Church Catholic or Universal ; creeds and confessions are particular and local bonds of union for particular churches.

What authority do they possess? Their authority is derived from the church which issues them ; and it is just in proportion to the credit or influence of the church. If the church is noted for meagre attainments in Literature and Theology, and for Fanaticism instead of solid Piety, her confession of faith possesses but small influence ; but if on the other hand the church is distinguished for her many teachers, eminent for their attainments in Literature and Theology, and eminent for their devoted Piety ; her confession of faith will possess a very high degree of authority, because it is the more likely, to give an accurate and faithful exhibition of the truth taught in the Bible. Such a degree of authority is due to the Westminster Confession of Faith, which, though not unobjectionable in every thing, yet deservedly stands high, as a compilation of Christian doctrine ; the character of the men who composed the Westminster Assembly, for learning and piety, was very high ; perhaps there never was a time, when the Church in Great Britain possessed so many talented and pious ministers ; and perhaps at no period since that time, has she possessed so many faithful ministers.

The Confessions of Faith of the reformed churches on the Continent, also stand very high ; all of them compiled after the church had passed through much tribulation and persecution, and when their piety was more deep toned than ever it has been since ; all their compilations seem to be the result, not only of experience and learning, but also of much assist-