

to suppose and to take for granted, that the Confession drawn up as "the form of sound words," has brought together clearly the doctrines of evangelical truth, all of which unite for their centre in the grand fact of "Christ crucified." But though this be granted, you are still entreated to bear in mind such particulars as the following:—

Remember, that no Confession of Faith is ever to be put in the room of the Bible. It is, on the contrary, to draw its whole authority from the Bible. Again, a Confession of Faith is never to supersede your daily use of the Bible. Nay, on the contrary, while you try "the form of sound words," and ascertain the soundness of it by the test of Bible truth, you are always to take it up and use it just for a directory to the Bible itself, and as a guide for the more thoroughly searching and understanding of the Scriptures.

Yet now, in these and in other points of view, how profitable for spiritual and moral ends may "the form of sound words" become. It, first of all, unequivocally tells in what sense the Church to which we belong, understands the Scriptures. It next brings the friends of evangelical truth to cherish among themselves a bond of union that is comforting and edifying. It serves, likewise, to spread their knowledge and faith, by the public divulging which is thus made of their sentiments.

Further, it is beneficial in protecting the doctrines, chosen and received, against the wild movements of speculative innovation. It supplies, also, the help most effective to the studying of the Bible through the systematic arrangement which it gives to the truths of the Bible. Moreover, it enables a Christian Church to fulfil one of her evident obligations. For, while individual members of the religious communion are personally bound to make acknowledgment of Christ Jesus by the celebrating of Gospel ordinances, and by the conformity of their life in their whole conduct to the Gospel rule,—so the Church of Christ, in her corporate capacity, is equally bound to declare her adherence to "the truth as in Jesus." Thus, the Church is to become the witness on earth for her glorified Head in heaven; and being "the pillar of the truth," as the apostle declares, she holds out, from what resembles a public edict, the doctrine of salvation through the atoning blood of the Saviour, who is "God manifest in the flesh."

Now, my dear friends, let me specially remind you of this motive still remaining to promote all her interests, that she is the church of an evangelical creed. Thanks be to God, her "form of sound words" is not yet wrenched from you. There still remain to you, under authority, her Confession and Catechisms, which you never can sufficiently value nor seriously enough study with diligence, preparation and prayer. These were composed and set forth by men (however

now-a-days contemptuously spoken of) who were peculiarly qualified by the Head of the Church for the work which he had given them to do. Yes. They were not only men of deep study, but also men of prayer; who lived near to God; and who, searching, were mighty in the Scriptures.

And hence, through their experimental knowledge of the Word, how copiously have they drawn from the divine treasure the materials both for proof and illustration! Yea, with what copiousness, and yet discriminativeness have they heaped the riches of the Bible upon the pages of the Confession and Catechisms, all to give you, by your comparing of text with text, the best means of solving your doubts—of enlarging your knowledge in divine things—of strengthening your faith and purifying your heart.

More especially let me now refer to "The Shorter Catechism,"—an abridgment of the other Standards of the Church of Scotland—a wonderful "form of sound words"—a perfect compendium of saving truth. That precious manual, both doctrinal and practical, begins by setting forth "the chief end" of human existence,—the glorifying and enjoying of the great God. It sets forth next "the Scriptures" for the only rule by which to guide you in accomplishing the precious end. It proceeds to disclose the character of God—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; to record the works of creation and providence, and to describe the first estate of man—his fall from innocence, and the miserable effects of his first transgression. Then, pointing out the mercy of an eternal election to save sinners, it declares, for accomplishing that gracious design, the mysterious person of the Mediator, God and Man, and His three offices of Prophet, Priest, and King, executed by Him in His estate of humiliation and exaltation. It farther tells of the blessed agency of the Holy Spirit, in applying to believers the benefits of redemption—benefits received in this life, at death, and at the resurrection. Next it comes forth with a comprehensive view of the duties which gratitude for the redemption and love to the Redeemer urge upon your faithful and earnest diligence. These duties are placed before you arranged and enjoined through an exposition of the ten commandments, the most impressive though concise that can be given. How impressive and solemn the lesson thus taught on the unchangeable obligation of the moral law! Instead of relaxing it, the Saviour's atonement binds it with redoubled strength on you for the rule of life. All your sins against that law you pray and you hope are to be forgiven through the blood of the Great Sacrifice, and buried forever out of remembrance as in the grave of Jesus. But the moral law against which you have sinned—that, you are well assured, was not buried there. It is "ever quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword—the dis-