

their belief. A second period of the formation of creeds, or what may be more distinctively called confessions, was in somewhat—though not exactly—parallel circumstances, when the modern Church was called upon to throw off the incrustations of the dark ages.

I may here notice incidentally that the name "Confession of Faith" is a misnomer, as they are confessions of belief, that is of the intellectual views or opinions of their writers on the teachings of Scripture; but the use of the name has often led to the result that an honest difference as to the correctness of such an opinion, has been bitterly resented as an apostasy from the faith of the Gospel. But surely it is possible for two Christians to differ as to the meaning of a passage of Scripture, without each assuming that the other has separated from the living Saviour to whom his faith binds him.

Creeds and confessions of belief necessarily partake of the peculiarities of the time of their origin. The old ones, such as the Athanasian creed, consist of the Greek philosophical speculations on the Hebrew Scriptures; or to speak more exactly, of the speculations of Arjan intellect on Shemitish sacred writings. A singular result of this has been the use of expressions, which, if they ever conveyed any real ideas to the ancient mind, certainly do not do so to the modern. The Scripture terms employed to denote the official and functional position of the persons of the Trinity in the glorious plan of salvation have been misapplied and misunderstood as expressing their personal relations to each other, and passing centuries have not eliminated the error. Many bitter and weary controversies might have been avoided had it been observed that they had no necessary connection with the Scripture truths on which they were ostensibly founded.

The Westminster standards originated in an age of strong, stern and rugged theology. They present the character of God in its sterner aspect, rather than in that loving one in which the Gospels and Epistles delight. This is no doubt a defect, but we must at the same time remember that the men who formed the Assembly were giants in intellect and learning, and mighty in the Scriptures. We have an illustration of the promise of the text, and an evidence of its fulfilment in the manifest guidance of that Spirit of truth directing the human work of the Assembly, in the fact that after nearly two and a half centuries of testing and trial, its system of doctrine stands unimpaired, and that even as regards the mere drapery of that system, so little should have become obsolete.

The Presbyterian Church takes the true position on the question of creeds; in regarding the Word of God as the infallible standard of truth, and the Confession as a generally correct and useful summary of its doctrinal teachings. The Westminster divines claimed no infallibility for their work, but ever referred it to the Word of God; and founded all claims to its acceptance on its agreement with that Word. The same principle forms the foundation of our branch of the Church—the Act of Union declaring that the Scriptures are the only infallible rule, and that the Westminster Confession shall form the subordinate standard. The authority can thus be found in any question as to what our teaching is to be. The question is now agitating many minds whether the Confession could be improved by a revision and a shortening with the aid of the increased knowledge of this century. No doubt theoretically it could; but whether in present circumstances it would be practicable to improve it, is very doubtful. There is every probability that alterations made in the present temper of any Presbyterian Church, would be anything but an improvement. On doctrinal questions the fullest forbearance should be exercised as to differences of views among brethren, and whenever a change is deemed necessary it will be better to append an explanatory note or declarative enactment, than to mutilate the grand old document itself; while differences of opinion on what are not matters of doctrine, may be left alone. If there are any in our Church who are worshippers of the mere letter of the Confession, and who wish to have an entire verbal acceptance of it, they had better dismiss these wishes at once, as the time for their fulfilment is long past in the light and knowledge of the present day. And if there are among us those whose hearts are trembling for the Ark of God, amid the disintegrating tendencies of the age, they may dismiss their fears, assured that the bulwarks of our system of

doctrinal truth are founded on the Rock of Ages, and cannot be shaken.

The Westminster Standards were never meant to stand in the way of a fuller and deeper study of God's Word, as the fountain of truth, nor to be regarded as the ultimatum of its teachings. Two considerations shew this. 1st. The promise of the text is for all time, and belongs to believers living in the nineteenth century as fully as to those who lived in the seventeenth; and it is to be sought for in connection with diligent study of God's revealed truth. 2nd. It is evident that we as a Church do not regard the Confession as the ultimatum of theology, from the care and attention bestowed on our theological colleges, and our efforts and expenditure to increase their efficiency; as also from the value we attach to high training for the ministry, which needs deep and continuous study. It must be acknowledged that the training of our ministry is not what it ought to be, and increased efforts must be put forth to raise it to a higher standard. The great questions which occupy man's thought, are of a shifting nature, and we shall soon be left in the background, unless by intense effort we can keep abreast of the age, using every source of aids for the study of the holy Scriptures, and at the same time, can meet and conquer the sceptical tendencies of the age on their own ground of science and philosophy. An appeal to authority here is useless now, whatever it may have been in the past.

There is in each age some truth which attains prominence, and which being opposed, becomes the present truth for which the Church as God's witness is required to testify. The personal existence of God and His converse with the human spirit, the reality of His revelation and the authority of His Word are called in question to-day. Human authority is being exalted above the divine, and the host of God, relying on the present living power of the Spirit of truth, must oppose error and uphold the authority of God's truth. To us in this young nation our divine Head is now committing an important work, to plant and cultivate a Church of a pure Scriptural form and teaching pure Scriptural doctrines. O may the grace of God and the teaching of the Spirit of truth be so given to us, that we may be faithful in handing down God's testimony and His law to latest generations.

And now, fathers and brethren, proceeding to the work of the Synod, let us seek to realize the presence and guidance of the Spirit of truth, that the beauty of the Lord may be upon us, and God's work in our hands may be established.

#### REMINISCENCES OF THE ORIGIN OF TWO PRESBYTERIAN COLLEGES IN CANADA.

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##### I.—QUEEN'S COLLEGE.

In the year 1831 the Synod of the Presbyterian Church of Canada in connection with the Church of Scotland was formed. The United Synod, organized in 1830, several times discussed the importance of establishing a theological institution in Upper Canada. The latter body numbered fifteen ministers in 1830, and the Presbyterians of Upper and Lower Canada were reckoned at about 30,000, so that by 1861 we had increased nearly twelve-fold, as the census that year gave us over 360,000. In the year 1835 several of the ministers of the United Synod joined the Synod of Canada, and in 1836 the Toronto Presbytery resolved to overture that Synod, praying for the establishment of a theological college. At the Synod held in 1838, the Presbyteries of Toronto and Hamilton overtured the Synod on the same subject, and it was then resolved to originate such an institution, and a committee was appointed to prepare a scheme for that object. The Commission of Synod of 1839 recommended that immediate steps be taken to raise \$80,000 to \$100,000 for the endowment of a literary and theological college, stating that it would be easy to do so, as the Presbyterian population was computed at 100,000. It would be easier now to raise \$150,000 for the endowment of Knox College, when the adherents of our Church in the two Provinces are probably four times as many. The object was two-fold, to furnish education to the rising youth of our people, based on Scriptural principles, and to train a native ministry to supply our spiritual destitution. They say that the Church of Scotland has always been distinguished for the scholarship of her ministers, and so have most of the churches that have sprung from her. At the Synod held in July, 1840,

instructions were given to Presbyteries to collect funds for the endowment of Queen's College, Kingston. Meantime several young men, brought up in Canada, had devoted themselves to the service of the Lord, in the work of the Gospel ministry. Rev. Angus McColl, of Chatham, began his studies in 1834 or 1835 under the auspices of the Presbytery of Hamilton, with Dr. Rae, Principal of the Hamilton Grammar School, a teacher eminent for scholarship and urbanity. In February, 1838, Mr. McColl was joined by the writer, and in September, 1838, by John McKinnon, late of Carleton Place, Ont. Then followed Messrs. Balmer and Dueno, George Ball (now Dr. Bell), and Lachlan McPherson, of Williams. Dr. Tassie, the famous teacher of the Galt High School, was assistant to Dr. Rae. After three years at Hamilton, the writer studied in 1841 under the care of Rev. William Rintoul of Streetsville, and the teacher of the Streetsville Grammar School, Mr. A. Simpson. While at Hamilton, the Presbytery regularly held examinations of the students. On 7th March, 1842, Queen's College was opened, the Professors being Principal Rev. Thomas Liddell, D.D., and Rev. P. C. Campbell, A.M., Professor of Classical Literature. The College began with the following theological students: Angus McColl, John McKinnon, George Bell, Robert Wallace, Thomas Wardrope, William Bain, and John Corbett—the three last not having studied at Hamilton. Then followed Patrick Gray, the late esteemed pastor of Chalmers Church, Kingston; Alexander Wallace, of Huntingdon, Quebec; and Lachlan McPherson. Most of these continued together during three sessions, until near the close of April, 1844. This little band of praying students formed a very happy brotherhood, very much attached to each other and to their professors, applying themselves closely to their studies, and seldom taking relaxation save for a walk on a Saturday afternoon, more rarely a row in a boat, or a drive with a friend. Sometimes they met for an hour at the house of some friend for music and genial intercourse, so promotive of elasticity of spirits, health, and happiness. The writer enjoyed very much these interchanges of thought and feelings on literary, social, and religious topics, and felt that he derived much benefit from them. Young men during their course of study need relaxation, and nothing tends more to their education, in its broadest sense, than the enjoyment of good select society, such as will give elevation and expansion to their views, and ease and grace to their manners. The leading families of our Church would confer a great boon on the living ministry, and on the Church and country, if they would kindly and prudently open their houses to at least such students as may be properly introduced to them, and thus assist them in becoming acquainted with cultivated society, and with its customs and privileges, as ministers ought, from their education, to be fitted for easy intercourse with all classes of society. Two of the students (George Bell and the writer) established Sabbath schools in connection with the Central School in St. Andrew's Church—the one on Point Henry, the other at Portsmouth, west of the Penitentiary—the latter, superintended by the writer, is still carried on under the auspices of Professor Mowat. The writer also formed a prayer meeting and distributed tracts on Saturday afternoons, and in short did very much the kind of work from the beginning of his studies that is now done by the Y.M.C.A. Indeed, of all the reminiscences of College life, none are so delightful as those connected with efforts to advance the cause of the Redeemer, and the salvation of souls. Such efforts always brought an immediate reward, and left no sense of uneasiness, lest precious time had been wasted or not employed as profitably as it ought to have been. Students might do much good by speaking tenderly and faithfully to their friends, companions, and others whom they meet by the way, about the value of the soul, and the value and necessity of an interest in Christ. Other things often pain us in the recollection; this gives unalloyed satisfaction. Young men can often obtain more ready access to the minds of others than ministers of the Gospel, their professional character acting as a hindrance in their way. The professors invited the students occasionally to breakfast, dinner, or tea, and endeavoured to combine instruction with recreation. Geological and other cabinets thrown open at such times might be made highly conducive to the profit of students. The Principal of the College, Dr. Thomas Liddell, previously pastor of Lady Glenorchy's Chapel, Edinburgh, was a kind, genial,