

to such summaries, "the mystery of faith," "the mystery of Godliness," i. Tim. iii. 9, 15. The following can scarcely be rejected as having this particular reference; 2 Tim. i. 13, 14. "Hold fast the form of sound words:" the word *form* literally signifies, a sketch or first draught: an outline. Hold fast the draught or outline of wholesome doctrine. And again, Heb. vi. 1. "Leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on to perfection;" and then follows a statement of heads of doctrine that had been taught.

Nor is it necessary, to suppose that the opposition offered to the truth, was the only cause, which led the Apostles to adopt such summaries. As teachers of a particular system of truth, their own minds would naturally resolve this system into its elements; and for the assistance, and guidance of those who desired to learn, or to become Teachers in the church, they would furnish them with such synopses.

In proportion as controversy agitated the Church, it became necessary, to draw up a more expanded form of doctrine; hence the origin of the Nicene Creed, and the creed of Athanasius. Superstition ascribes to the Apostles the creed which bears their name; no evidence, however, can be adduced, to prove that they were engaged in compiling this excellent formula, which, though of human composition, and enriched at different times by different hands, is worthy of esteem, for its comprehensive views of doctrine, its perspicuous language, and its neat arrangement; and commends itself to the general reception of the Christian Church.

To the same causes are to be traced the origin of Confessions of faith; which are more detailed exhibitions of the doctrines embodied in the Creed, accompanied with proofs from Scripture. When these formularies of doctrine are exhibited in the catechetical form, they are called the Church's catechism. And in certain circumstances the Church has found it necessary, to adopt a supplementary book, called a Testimony, the object of which is, to defend the confession of faith, to state the present truth in opposition to prevailing errors, and to give due warning against the sins of the times. The testimony bears the same relation to the confession of Faith, that the confession of Faith bears to the Creed. A reason may be demanded for the continuance of such formulas of doctrine in the church: are they necessary? The reply is, that they are indispensably necessary. The Church of Christ is an association of those who profess to believe in his name; besides the invisible bond of faith and of the Spirit, which unites every true member of the association to Christ the Head of it, and to one another as partakers of a divine nature, a visible bond of union is required for the association. Every society must have an object to accomplish, must hold certain views, and adopt certain plans of operation, for the attainment of its object; these views and plans digested into heads, or articles, form the Constitution of the Society. In like manner the Christian Church must have her constitution, detailing