

The Christian.

ST. JOHN. N. B. APRIL 1894

EDITORIAL.

REASON OF THE CHRISTIAN'S HOPE.

But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts and be ready always to give every man that asketh a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear.

Question—As much is said about your peoples' belief, I would like to ask what you regard as the creed of the church?

Answer—The creed of any religious body which is likely to hold long together, whether true or false, called also its foundation, is a statement so brief and plain that its members can grasp it. It is also a statement concerning a person whom they can trust and look to in time of need. We will first mention false creeds, then true creeds. "Mohammed is God's supreme prophet" is a creed or foundation. On it is built Mohammedanism. All who believe this are Mohammedans, and bound to trust to him and take the Koran—his book—as their guide. "Joseph Smith is God's supreme prophet" is another creed. All who believe it are Mormons, and bound to accept the book of Mormon—Smith's book. These creeds are brief and plain with a person in the centre. We will next consider true creeds. Oh, Israel, "The Lord thy God is one Lord." On this creed rests the Jewish church, and it distinguishes Israel from the nations around which worshipped a plurality of gods. The signature to the laws of Moses is "I am the Lord." Christianity has its *creed*—the most extraordinary statement ever heard by human ears. God revealed his mind to prophets and messengers, who told it to others, but this great truth he spoke himself from heaven in the hearing of men. When Jesus went up out of the water of baptism the heavens were opened, the spirit of God descended like a dove and lighted upon him, and lo, a voice from heaven saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." This is the creed of the church of Christ. All true believers of this creed shall have everlasting life. On the coast of Caesarea Philippi, Jesus asked, "Whom say ye that I am?" When Peter answered, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," Jesus blessed him, called the truth which he had confessed "this rock," and affirmed of it: 1st, "My Father had revealed it unto thee." 2nd, "I will build my church upon it." 3rd, "The gates of hades shall not prevail against it." Jesus died for confessing that he was the Son of the living God. The Holy Spirit confirmed the great truth by Jesus' resurrection. If he were not the Son of the living God he would remain in the grave, his flesh would see corruption, and death, or the gates of hades, would prevail. But his divinity, which was first announced by his Father, confessed by himself in his death and confirmed by the Holy Spirit in his resurrection, shines on the brow of Christianity, the creed and foundation of the church of God. It is a plain truth, which can be received by the people of common intellect. It tells us that the man who died for our sins and rose again is as divine as he is human, and because perfectly fitted for the work is the only mediator between God and man.

Q.—Many understand Jesus to mean Simon Peter by "this rock," and hold Peter to be the head of the church on earth. Do the words *Peter* and *this rock* mean the same?

A.—They are different words. Both mean *rock*, but very different rocks. Jesus called Simon *Petros*, but called the truth which he confessed *Petra*. *Petros* means a moving stone or rock, but *Petra* means an immovable or bed-rock. The first was fit to be dressed and put into a building, the second fit for a foundation to hold up a building. Peter proved himself to

be a changeable moving-stone, but this *rock* can never be moved. *Petros* was a strong man, *Petra*, a rock truth. Jesus confessed this truth before his judges and died for it, and those who come to God by Jesus' death make the same confession. Paul tells Timothy that he had made a good confession before many witnesses, and in the next verse said that Jesus Christ had before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession. When the anxious eunuch heard Philip preach Christ, and came to a certain water, he asked, "What doth hinder me to be baptized?" And Philip said, "If thou believest with all thine heart thou mayest." And he answered and said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." On this confession he was baptized. This illustrates what Paul says, "For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." (Rom. x 10) The man that believeth with all his heart what God said of Jesus at the Jordan, sets to his seal that God is true, and is so affected with God's compassion in giving up his beloved Son to die on the cross to save him, that he gladly goes to his Saviour's arms and before men repeats the record that God hath given of his Son. No other creed can soften his heart and seal it with the Holy Spirit. He who thus confesses Jesus before men and faith fully hold fast the good confession till death, will hear Jesus confess him before his Father and the holy angels.

Q.—But do you not say that the Bible and it alone is your creed?

A.—Certainly, because the Bible and it alone is Christ's book. He who believes with all his heart that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, accepts of him as a divine Saviour, and all he says as divinely true and perfect, therefore his book is his perfect guide. Though he may not understand all that Jesus says, he firmly believes it, because the Son of God has said it. When Jesus told Martha what would happen at the resurrection—that believers, though dead, would then live, and living believers would never die, he asked her if she believed this; her reply was, "Yea, Lord, I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world." Whether she fully understood it or not, she fully believed it, because he had said it. The true believer searches Christ's book, earnestly asking, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" and does it *because* it is *his* command. He asks for no better reason.

Q.—But all Trinitarians believe in the divinity of Christ.

A.—This fact is gratifying, for all should believe it. But many who hold it as true do not regard it as a *foundation truth*, nor its belief with the heart and confession with the mouth a proper test of Church membership. When persons seek admission they are often questioned on other points more than on this. It is not unfrequently said in disparagement of receiving persons on this *creed* that "everybody believes it."

Q.—Do the Disciples always receive persons for baptism and church membership on a confession of this creed?

A.—So far as known to me there is no exception. They uniformly require of applicants just what Philip did of the eunuch.

Q.—Do they never require a vote of the church as to the fitness of the applicant?

A.—Never.

Q.—How can the preacher know that the candidate's heart is changed?

A.—The preacher cannot look on the heart, neither can the members of the church. Man looks at the outward appearance, but God looketh upon the heart. For that very reason men ought not to vote on that which none but God can know. The outward appearance, though generally, is not always, an index of the heart. So a preacher and members of a church can be deceived. But a man's baptism is a matter entirely between himself and Christ, in

which the church is not responsible, and has no right to vote for or against. The New Testament nowhere even hints at such a vote.

Q.—Did not Peter ask advice of others about the baptism of Cornelius and his friends?

A.—By no means. He had fully decided on their baptism before he said a word to others about it. Up to that time Peter and all believing Jews thought it decidedly wrong for Gentiles to be baptized, or have the gospel preached to them. But now God had shown him his error, and he came and preached the gospel to these Gentiles, and while preaching to them the Holy Spirit fell miraculously upon them, as upon the apostles at the beginning, so that the Jewish brethren who came with Peter heard them speak with tongues and magnify God. He then asked these brethren if any man could forbid water that these should not be baptized who had received the Holy Ghost as well as the apostles had. And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. (Acts x. 45-48). There was no voting there.

The miracles granted at the coming of the Gentiles into the fold of Christ were to convince believing Jews and all others to the end of time that God is no respecter of persons, but that in every nation he that feareth him and worketh righteousness is accepted with him. It was a new revelation of God's philanthropy. He gave his beloved for the whole world, and not for one nation only. While parties are disputing about man-made creeds, some seeking to revise them and others opposing, God is graciously calling all to hear and receive what he has said of his beloved Son, and to build on that foundation which he has laid in Zion—clear enough, strong enough and broad enough to hold up the whole family in heaven and earth.

We intend to speak in our next on *repentance*.

Original Contributions.

IMPRESSIONS OF CANADA.

I struck St. John by way of Toronto. My impressions of Canada began there. No American ever saw such a quiet Sunday in any similar city of his own land; no street cars rattling everywhere, no saloons with back doors open, streets thronged with pedestrians going to church, and, marvellous to an American, more of such a turn-out in the evening than in the morning. One says to himself: "The cars don't run; there won't be anybody at church to-night." But, bless you, people come out better in this foreign city, where Sunday is respected by street car corporations and saloons, than in our own boasted "city of churches," where an army of men are bound as mechanically to their cars as the cars to their track seven days every week. Toronto is an object-lesson on the Sunday question that make one stay and think. How a hundred and eighty to two hundred thousand people can get along without street cars and saloons one day in the week is a great mystery to an American—but they do seem to do it, and what seems stranger still, they seem thoroughly satisfied with their chance of footing it all day amidst the monotony of sober and civil people.

One takes a drive about the city and finds himself surprised and pleased, first, by the absence of wooden houses; second, by the powness and neatness of the brick houses that stand in rows miles long; third, by the fewness of tenement houses—it is a city of homes; fourth, by the great number and seeming richness of the church buildings; fifth, by the university buildings. I had heard of the university of Toronto, but was not prepared for the revelation that came to me. This university is one of the greatest on our continent, and bids fair to rival those of the mother country in all but age. Last of all to surprise and delight one is the provincial building—a noble structure in granite,