

the ordinances of God, you could not have contrived a more effectual means. To enter on them without preparation, to attend them without any purpose or effort of self-application, to think no more of them afterward, and to spend the rest of the day in visiting, talking, eating, riding or thinking just as on any other day,—all this seems as if expressly designed, a careful plot, to destroy the impressions of God's house, and to prevent the two hours of worship from interrupting the dominion of earth in the soul."

"That's rather a long sermon, husband," said Jane.

"And a pretty close one, too," added Smith, soberly. "But it is all true, every word of it. Yet I do not see how I can help it. What can I do? what shall I do?"

"I can tell you what rules helped me," replied David, "and I dare say that by observing them you will find yourself essentially benefited. Will you try?"

"Let me hear them, and I will tell you."

"They are three. First listen to the preacher religiously; that is, in a devout frame of mind; as if you had just said your prayers, and were holding out your hand to receive the blessing you had asked. Secondly, apply it to yourself all along; say Amen to every truth, and say Yes, I will, to every good advice. This will excite a strong interest in the matter. Thirdly, think it over afterward: don't go at once about other things and forget it all, but retire by yourself, and recall what you heard and felt; consider what you ought to do in consequence; and lay out a distinct plan of doing accordingly during the week. Then make it a regular part of every day's business to think over and act upon that particular lesson, and so mix it up with all your prayers and all your work. Follow these rules, and you never will say again that preaching does no good."

"I believe so," said Smith; and I will try them. But I am afraid I never shall have resolution enough to succeed."

"Do it in faith, nothing doubting;—or if you doubt yourself, do not doubt God, but pray for his blessing till you receive it."

They had for some time reached David's house, and were pausing at the gate to finish their discourse. As they now turned away to separate, Smith stopped and cried out, "One word more, neighbour; pray tell me if you observe these rules yourself."

David hesitated a moment, and then, with an expression of countenance that was half sadness and half a smile, he said, "The question is a very fair one, though I do not see that the answer can affect the goodness of the rules."

"But then I shall have the more courage to undertake them, if I find that they are real things, and not mere words."

"Very well; I told you that they had helped me; and they have, unspeakably;—but I do not live up to them fully,—I do not fully live up to any of my good purposes. But this I can tell you, solemnly,—that it is only by living by them that I ever gained anything, and I have always found myself a loser, just in proportion as I have slighted them."

CREEDS AND FORMULAS OF FAITH.

[From the French of M. Coquerel, as translated in the Irish Unitarian Magazine.]

The last point in our Confession of Faith which remains to be explained and defended, concerns our views respecting compulsory Creeds and articles of belief, those sandy foundations upon which the Protestant church has attempted to rest the fabric of her faith, and which have ever sunk beneath the weight of the edifice erected upon them. We shall merely direct attention to a few considerations which are connected with the religious view of the subject, and which go to show the futility of the charge, "that the interests of peace and truth will be compromised, unless a prescribed list of dogmas forms a sanitary cordon around the church."—In fact, the interests of truth and peace are always put forward as the two leading arguments in favor of such Confessions. "Without such formulas without a pledge on the part of her members to adhere to such, the church," say such logicians, "would be at the mercy of every wind of doctrine, and the faith of her adherents, as well as the teachings of her pastors, would be ever in a state of anarchy. There would be every where alarm, every where confusion, and the sounds of division and dispute be heard on every hand. Faith would be uncertain, peace still more precarious, there would be no rallying point for believers, and the people would be scattered abroad like sheep not having a shepherd." Now this seems to us to amount to saying that the great shepherd of souls has prepared an ill-fenced fold for his flock, and, notwithstanding his promises, has left them wandering and dispersed: because it is certain that in the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, which we receive as complete and sufficient,

there is no Confession of Faith prescribed, nor anything resembling one. If a Confession of Faith be indispensable to secure agreement of heart and mind, if the "unity of the Spirit," cannot be preserved "in the bond of peace" unless this "bond" be a compulsory creed, it remains to be explained how it happens, that the gospel contains no such creed. Those who advocate an authoritative control over the consciences of believers can never meet this difficulty. What! are we to believe that Jesus came to bring peace upon the earth and that he neglected the only means of securing it in his church! Are we to believe that the Prince of Peace has descended to Heaven and neglected to establish peace in the religious world upon safe and solid foundations! Are we to believe that the Savior left his work to be completed by the theologians of Augsburg or Rochelle, of Westminster or Dort! No! we have more respect for the Word of God than to believe these things. We have more humble trust in the gospel of Christ. We receive and cherish it as he gave it to the world, and we will not consent to substitute another gospel for the gift of our Lord. Our Master has said, "By this sign shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." And if love is the badge of the Christian, and no means exist of recognizing this badge but by referring to the note book of some creed, would not the Master himself have supplied the reference? A Confession of Faith is a supplement added to the gospel. We do not believe that the peace of the Christian world requires human genius to add an appendix to the work of the Holy Spirit!

The entire history of the church from the Council of Nice to the Synod of Dort, pleads in favor of our views of religious liberty. When the editors of the Montpellier "Recueil" affirm in their preface, that Confessions of Faith are "bonds of peace," they forget that the most violent and savage controversies which have distracted the Christian world both before and since the Reformation, have owed their origin to these very "bonds of peace," which have been really declarations of war, edicts of proscription, and charters of sectarianism. They forget too, that in every case the immediate result of an exercise of arbitrary power, in decreeing a particular faith, is to create a Remonstrant church side by side with the established one.

The Reformation was but a remonstrance against the faith decreed by Rome, and the flourishing, enlightened and pious Congregations of Remonstrants in Holland, are protests against the decrees of Dort. Whether the theatre of action be large or small, erected on the banks of the Tiber or the borders of the Meuse, whether the performers be clothed in the scarlet robes of the sacred college or the black gown of the Protestant synod, the catastrophe is the same. There is the same assumption of ecclesiastical authority on one side, and the same resistance in defence of Christian liberty on the other; the same questions have again and again to be resolved, "Shall another believe for me, or shall I believe for myself? Is the Bible to be freely interpreted, or its meaning determined by a synodical decree?"

The interests of the Christian faith also, far from being served, are, like those of Christian peace, gravely compromised by compulsory confessions. The editors of the Montpellier "Recueil" complacently specify five species of confusions which prevail in a church not protected by such confessions;—those which distract the Preachers, the Divines, the lay Members of the church, those which divide the church and the state, and those which prevail on the part of the Free Church and the Churches which impose a creed. Now we ask, have compulsory confessions saved the Christian world from such distractions? Germany and the North of Europe, France, Switzerland, Holland and England, all have had creeds as compulsory as the most ardent ecclesiastical authority could desire. Do these nations owe to such organizations the blessings of religious peace? The United States are beyond all comparison the country where, in the present day, compulsory creeds serve most stringently to guard the church for their adherents, and protect it against intruders; and yet this is the country where the greatest diversity of doctrine prevails, where congregations are the most divided, where controversy is the most violent and noisy. Such are the services which compulsory confessions have rendered to Christian faith; these are the sad evidences of history, of ecclesiastical history! We regard the authors of such confessions as discharging in the religious world the functions of the ancient heralds. No doubt these feudal officers were at times employed to announce a peace, but their ordinary duties were to mark out the lists, to open the barriers and to sound the charge.

We may here repeat the remarks we have already made in reference to the Holy Scriptures when speaking of Christian peace. If a formula of doctrines were necessary for the interests of Christian truth, we should find one in the gospel. But there is nothing of the kind; so far from it, no two things can be more

different than the gospel and a confession of faith. One is evidently human, the other is evidently divine. If the reader of the New Testament attentively examines the mode in which the truth is there announced, notes the style, and attends to the manner of expression of the various writers, he will inevitably arrive at the conclusion that nothing can be more detrimental to the truth, than to encase it in the coffers of creeds; that, narrower than her dimensions require, they crush her form as with an iron vice, and well nigh strangle her in their efforts to reduce her form to their capacity. The New Testament is precise, distinct, authoritative in its declarations; grand, poetic and free in its style; the living acting body, fresh from the Creator's hand; human creeds are like uncoffined skeletons, falling rapidly to dust—and dust serves no other purpose than to blind.

Compulsory confessions are also irreconcilable with the fundamental principle of Protestantism—Freedom of examination. It is miserable inconsistency to call one's self a Protestant, that is to lay claim to religious liberty, and at the same moment to sign a Confession of Faith, which is fettering liberty and conscience for all future time: The very act of signing such confessions is an admission of their human origin. No one ever dreams of signing the New Testament.—That bears Christ's signature alone. They only sign human engagements.

We may be told that the Reformers to whom we owe religious independence, were the first to succumb to a compulsory creed. No doubt of it—but herein they were inconsistent. Even Luther himself entertained different sentiments at different times respecting the presence of Christ in the Eucharist. The advocates of creeds would have required from him as many signatures as he entertained opinions! Let the flames which consumed Servetus proclaim in hideous characters how unhappily just is the charge of inconsistency to which we have alluded. The Catholics who condemned him at Vienne erred but in one respect, Calvin doubly erred. Protestants and Romanists agreed upon the sentence, but there was this difference between the judges,—the Catholic was alone consistent.

Irreconcilable with Protestant liberty, compulsory creeds are also opposed to another essential principle of Protestantism—progress. We know how distasteful this word is to many, and what specious arguments its use will furnish to those who attack our principles "You wish then," they will say, "to improve Christianity, to perfect revelation, to elevate what is already divine." By no means. Our object is to improve Christians, not Christianity. To enlarge their knowledge of the gospel, not to perfect what is already complete. Our opinion is, that the interpretation of the holy Scriptures adopted by many Christians sects may be improved.—We hope for instance that we may yet bring many to see with us that notwithstanding the assertion of creeds, it cannot be right to believe that infants may be damned before they are born, and we contend that by placing their signatures to such a doctrine as this, Christians are foes to progress. It is a melancholy and may be a perilous task to decide between the signature of yesterday and the conviction of to-day! Our view of the subject under this aspect is singularly confirmed by the declaration of the first compilers of our Protestant Confession; they begin their preface by saying, "These pages set forth our own faith, and also show how the points at present in controversy have been before time understood and explained." The early Reformers then, whose words I here quote, engaged to set forth and maintain their opinions only. We ask for the same liberty, and by demanding it we believe we show ourselves their legitimate successors.

THE BEST FORTUNE.

BY JOSEPH BARKER.

The best fortune that a parent can leave to his children is a good education. It is very little that money can do for children. If we could leave them as rich as the wealthiest in the land, their riches could not make them happy.

We cannot even keep them from want, by leaving them money. Riches are amongst the most unstable things in the world; the winds themselves are scarcely more unsettled. Many of the poorest creatures in the country are the descendants of wealthy families. The children of wealthy parents are going down into wretchedness every day. Riches are perpetually making themselves wings, and flying away as an eagle toward heaven.

I may be told that there are ways to secure property to children, so as to make it impossible for them to make it away. I know there are ways to keep property in families, but this will not secure those to whom it is left from want. They cannot sell their

houses, perhaps; but they can sell their rents. They cannot make away their income; but they can spend it before it is due. They can run into debt, and they can run into prison, however certain their income may be. They can plunge themselves so deep into debt, and strip themselves so bare of credit, that with the largest estate in the country they shall be unable to keep house, or to remain at large in their own country. Some of the richest of our countrymen are obliged to live in exile, while their estates and habitations are in the hands of others.

I know that property may be made a means of usefulness, if those who have it are wise and good; but it is very difficult to bring people to be wise and good, when they are surrounded from their youth with the temptations of wealth. It is not so easy to get them to learn, when they know that they are entitled to great property. They are prone to think that money will do all things, and so they neglect to acquire knowledge. Money often makes youths proud and unruly, and places them above their teachers. It makes some effeminate, so that learning is too severe a discipline for them. It makes some profligate, so that they give themselves to sensual indulgences, till they have neither time nor taste for the pursuits of science. It makes many forget God, and neglect prayer, and shrink from the duties of a holy life, till they are alienated from all that is good, and made slaves to the vilest lusts and the most ruinous delusions. And when this is the case, their money becomes a curse to them; it is their torment while they live, and it hangs like a millstone round their necks when they die.

Children that have no prospect of wealth, escape these dangers. I know there are some disadvantages of another kind to which they are exposed; but they are not so serious as those which attend on wealth. The hardships of poverty make the labours of study a recreation. Children that have no more than their daily bread, have nothing to make them haughty, or to set them above their teachers. Their teachers have no temptations to grant them dangerous indulgences. They are not afraid of showing them their errors, or reforming their slowness, or of correcting their waywardness. Poor children find no hardships in the discipline of wisdom, but such as they are accustomed to daily.—Their plain food, their rough treatment, and their early toils, accustom them to bear unpleasant things; and when they meet with vexations in the pursuit of wisdom, they consider it no strange thing.

And poverty is more friendly to the cultivation of religion than wealth. The poor were the first that embraced the religion of Christ, and the disciples of Christ have always come chiefly from among the poor.—And religion is in all respects the most important part of a good education. No education is right, of which religion does not form the leading part; no man can be said to be properly educated at all, who has not been brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

And when you have been enabled not only to give a youth instruction in common learning, but to bring him to love and serve his God, you have given him a fortune indeed; you have given him that which surpasses in worth all the riches and distinctions in the world.

You have given him a fortune which will not soon leave him. Men may rob a man of his money, but it is not so easy to rob him of his knowledge and piety. The crafty may cheat a man of his wealth; the importunate may drag it from him; or a thief or a sudden disaster may take it away; but knowledge and piety are secure from these dangers.—Men cannot cheat us of our wisdom; the very attempts they make to beguile us, make us more wise. They cannot take it away by importunity; for the more we give the more we have remaining. And those disastrous floods, and fires, and tempests, which consume men's dwellings, sweep away the produce of our fields, or sink the treasures of the merchant in the deep, can do no mischief to the good man's treasuries of knowledge and religion.

Those events which take away the riches of the worldling, increase the riches of those who place their wealth in knowledge and piety. Even death itself, which strips the earthly man of all things, and commits him naked to the dust, brings the wise and godly man to the possession of all the treasures of heaven.

The riches of the mind make a man rich indeed. They give true happiness. The more a man seeks happiness in money, the more he is convinced of its vanity; but the more a man seeks happiness in religion, and the better he is satisfied. It meets all his wants, and it suits all changes of circumstances. It sweetens his pleasures, and it alleviates his cares. It gives comfort at home, and it cheers him abroad. It lightens his labors by day, and it sweetens his rest by night. It makes health a double blessing, and it