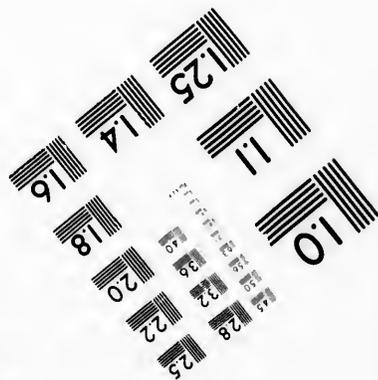
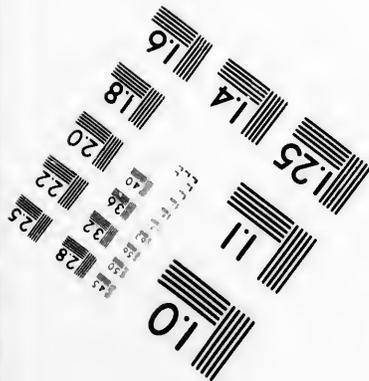
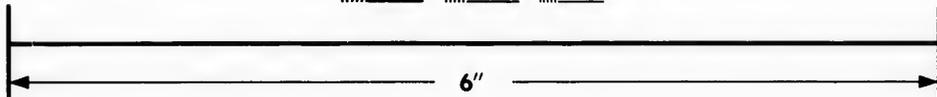
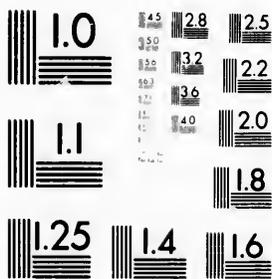
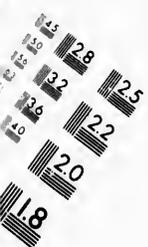


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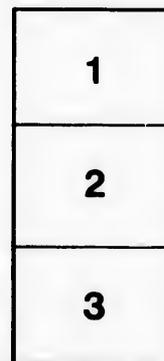
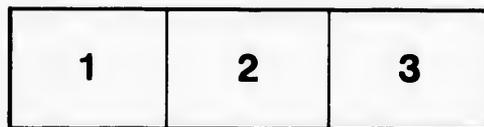
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CHURCH CREEDS

—AND—

LIBERTY.

A SERMON

By Rev. **J. R. JAQUES, D. D., Ph. D.,** President of
Libert College, Belleville, Ontario.

*[Delivered in Bridge Street Methodist Church,
Belleville, Sunday Morning,
April 27th, 1884.]*

PUBLISHED BY THE CONGREGATION.

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PRINTED AT THE ONTARIO BOOK AND JOB ROOM, OPP. CITY HALL.
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CHURCH CREEDS

—AND—

LIBERTY.

TEXT :—*Earnestly contend for the faith once delivered unto the Saints.—Jude 3rd.*

The word "faith" in this text means "creed" or "confession of faith." It is agreed that the word "faith" here means the *object of faith*, or the fundamental truths of the Gospel. For this faith we are exhorted to "earnestly contend."

There are now, as in the days of Jude, "certain men crept in unawares," (or "privily" as the revised version reads) "ungodly men," who deny this "faith" or "creed" and all faith and all creeds. Of these men there are two classes : first, "liberal Christians," so called, who deny the only Lord Jesus Christ, and, secondly, infidels of every grade and Agnostics, who deny not only "our Lord Jesus Christ," but the "only Lord God" and all religious truth.

Now, "Liberal Christianity," and "Agnosticism," while craftily withholding a creed or confession of faith, yet have a creed, written or unwritten, for which they contend with a zeal worthy of a better cause. A fundamental tenet in their creed is the rejection of all creeds. Have we not during the last week in this city, heard the outcry against church creeds by one who required columns of a daily paper to unfold his private personal creed ?

The objections against church creeds, expressed or suppressed, may be summed up in a few words.

First among the expressed objections it is said :

(1.) That church creeds are hostile to individual liberty, and oppressive.

(2.) That creeds are *useless*, because it is no matter what we believe inwardly, if we only act right outwardly.

(3.) That church creeds are, in many cases, inconsistent with each other and with truth.

(4.) That church creeds check improvement by fixing and fossilizing religious beliefs.

(5.) That belief in creeds and not virtuous conduct is made a condition of church fellowship and of final salvation.

(6.) That belief in any creed is neither rewardable nor punishable—that is, it has no moral quality ; for belief of demonstrated truth can have no merit, because it is necessary ; and disbelief of undemonstrated truth can have no demerit, because it, too, is necessary.

The suppressed objections against creeds may be stated as follows :

(1.) That religious or theological truth is not infallibly known, has no solid basis of certitude on which a creed may be founded.

(2.) Orthodox Christianity can best be abolished by abolishing the orthodox churches ; and the orthodox churches can best be abolished by abolishing the creeds on which, as a doctrinal basis, these churches are founded.

To meet these objections, we propose to show that the use of church creeds is innocent, rational, scriptural and necessary.

Here we remark that the opposition is not so much against a particular creed, as “creeds” or “dogmas” in general. They may affirm or even prove that a certain

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creed contains some error without proving their position, viz : That creeds, as such, are wrong and mischievous. We may admit that some creeds contain some mixture of error without admitting that creeds, as such, are wrong. Hence, without invalidating our position, we invite the opposition to point out and attack the errors of our creeds. We are more than willing to admit and rectify any error of our creed which they may detect and expose. But, mark, the objections are against "creeds,"—all creeds, whether true or false ! Else, why all this tirade against creeds and dogmas, as such ?

(1.) *We have a natural and political right to adopt and propagate a church creed.*

This abstract right, at least, we hope will be granted us.

That man is a strange advocate of "liberal" Christianity or "Freedom," who denies us the right to adopt and propagate what we consider an important and vital religious truth or creed. We have heard it said by George W. Curtis, the graceful rhetorician, but graceless theologian, that church creeds are enslaving and oppressive in their effects ; that they have as good a right to "dogmatize" at Rome as to "dogmatize" at Geneva, or Princeton, or Westminster, or Andover.

But let us see whether creeds deprive the people of their "liberties."

Like all men--'liberal' church men, or 'Agnostics' not excepted--I have a religious belief or creed. Now, have I not a right to put it in a written form as an individual confession of faith ? When I find another man who believes as I do, have we not a right to enter into partnership to enjoy and propagate our common creed ? And when we find other men to the number of hundreds, or thousands, or tens of thousands, who agree with us, have

we not *all* a right to assemble on the same theological platform and enter into partnership. Or, in other words, have we not a right to organize a church? For what is a church, in the lower sense, but a partnership between men having a common religious creed?

In this whole process, observe, there is no force used, no "liberties" are violated, no rights invaded.

Why then, all this tirade against creeds? In embracing and defending a creed, we exercise a right not denied us in other matters. A creed is supposed to be the statement of a fundamental religious doctrine, to defend which is no more infringement of personal freedom than to hold and defend the fundamental principles or axioms of any secular science. If as members of a scientific organization, or literary society, or political party, we have a right to adopt, record, and defend our common principles, platform or creed, we claim the same right as members of the church. If the opposition will grant us even this right, we shall at least have a fair field for the fight.

(2.) *A common creed, written or unwritten, is a necessary basis and bond of Church fellowship and organization.*

To perpetuate Christianity on the earth, we must have churches, or organizations of individuals. These individual elements of the organization must be attracted and cemented by some common principles. These common principles are of the nature of a creed. No society, secular or religious, can organize, thrive, and endure, unless there be at its foundation some common creed or platform of common principles, as a basis and bond of union. We defy the champions of Liberalism or Agnosticism to make the experiment!

For proof of our position we appeal to all history, to common observation, and to common sense.

(3.) *The varieties of creeds meet the varieties of human character.*

In this view, it is not necessary to assume that different creeds are *inconsistent* with each other, or with truth, but that they present different *sides* of truth. Church creeds are destined to harmonize in the future much more than at present. But the creeds of the various orthodox churches do not *now* differ materially from each other or from scriptural truth. They are the doctrinal views of thinkers occupying different standpoints and viewing different sides of the same truth.

For example, human salvation is a great Scriptural truth, one side of which exhibits Divine *Sovereignty*, the other side, human *freedom*, thus giving rise to two views, one Calvinistic, the other Arminian. But there is a *side* of truth in both views. Now there will doubtless ever be some constitutionally disposed to magnify Divine sovereignty, and others constitutionally disposed to magnify human freedom. Thus we may expect Calvinists and Arminians will not cease to be in the world. Nor are these diversities of creeds without their beneficent effect—nay, even perchance, a Providential design, in attracting diverse minds by one or the other pole of the same truth.

(4.) *The re-statement of Scriptural creeds is needed from time to time, to meet new exigencies in the history of the Church.*

New statements of old truths are needed to antagonize new errors, new vices and new dangers. This change or growth of creeds is a necessary result of the change and growth of error and sin among men.

Accordingly we find that the growing heresy of Arianism had to be met by new articles of belief, in the year 325, in what was called the "Nicene Creed." When, in

the latter part of the same century, the divinity of the Holy Spirit was denied by some, this rising heresy was met, in a general Church Council, by restating, recording and publishing the Scriptural doctrine touching this all-important subject. Then, when the church had become corrupt, and the Protestant movement began, it was necessary for the Protestants to issue a creed—called the “Augsburg Confession of Faith”—to meet and answer the misrepresentations of enemies, and to define authoritatively the distinctive tenets of the Protestant Church. And when amid the light of Protestantism, errors and heresies began to grow and spread, new articles of faith were needed to check these new errors and heresies. Indeed, the necessity of such creeds for such purposes, has been so generally admitted, that they have scarcely needed defence till these “last days.”

Moreover, if a church is established in China, or India, or any other heathen country, a creed must be adapted to the circumstances and exigencies of that particular church, by presenting conspicuously the testimony of the Bible against the sin of idolatry and the sins of paganism.

(5.) *A creed exhibits to the world in a concise and connected form, a summary of doctrines most important and vital, but scattered throughout the Bible.*

The Bible is not written in a convenient shape to answer the purposes of a creed. The most vital truths are presented in the Bible, as the most vital truths are presented in nature—not grouped and classified, but scattered and fragmentary, though in both cases, harmonious and divinely beautiful. No one department of nature makes a complete revelation of truth. On no single leaf, nor stone, nor shell, nor star, do you find an analysis or table

of contents of nature's great volume. While the orbs of heaven above discourse of sublime themes, the flowers beneath preach from their tiny pulpits lessons of tenderness and love. While the dazzling sun symbolizes that light, "which no man can approach unto," the glow worm too has its eloquence for the tutored soul. You cannot dig so deep in the earth but that you find some new book or leaf of nature's great library for man.

With microscopic eyes, you cannot see so far into the infinitely small, nor with telescopic eyes see so far into the infinitely great, as not to find some new lesson recorded in the handwriting of God. Now, as the man of science gathers from all the realm of nature all these divine lessons, and groups them into systems of truth, so the man of theology gathers from all the realm of Scripture its Divine lessons and groups them into systems of truth—or, if you please, a creed, that all men may conveniently see the toil-sought gems of Truth.

If, then, it is objected that the Bible is a sufficient creed, without any human summaries or systems, we reply, that on this principle, nature is a sufficient text-book without any human sciences—which principle, carried to its logical results, would end all human progress and carry man back to the dark ages.

(6.) *A correct Christian creed is the germ of all correct Christian character.*

"As a man thinketh so is he," is a maxim of profoundest philosophy. A correct or incorrect external life is but an inward belief or creed *acted out* and rendered visible. Character is but a creed crystallized and concrete. The Church has ever felt the need of creeds carefully prepared, solemnly adopted, and earnestly maintained, not only as a safeguard against erroneous *views*, but as a safeguard

against erroneous *lives*. Error in the head tends to error in the heart, and both tend to error in action.

(7.) *A Christian Creed, published and expounded, tends to educate and elevate the masses up to its high standard.*

Words are things of power, because words are *ideas* or *thought's*, and what but ideas or thoughts are the latent forces that elevate man to all the heights of civilization, or degrade him to all the depths of barbarism? The simplest creed that contains the germ of a correct Christian theology is more mighty to elevate the human soul, than all the philosophy of all human sages and moralists of all ages. But all truth vitalizes and exalts the human mind. Any vital truth stated in terse words, whether it be religious, scientific, or political truth, if recorded, published, defended, explained and applied, has in it a force that tells on the destiny of man more than the massing and marching of the mightiest armies. Ideas or thoughts—not Presidents or kings govern the world. "Knowest thou not," says Milton, "that truth is *mighty* next to the Almighty?"

As an illustration of this great principle, some of us have seen the effect of a few written words in the tragic history of slavery on this continent. Slavery was introduced and maintained in the United States *by a creed*—a perverse creed—conceived in blind ignorance, false philanthropy and godless political economy. And finally slavery was undermined and abolished *by a creed*. That creed was the "Declaration of Independence," which, however objectionable to us in some respects, contained some sublime truths. That creed, printed and published, read and re-read, quoted and applied, and heard from press, pulpit, and platform, had more to do with the shaping of public sentiment and of political parties, than all the plots of politicians, and all the plans of statesmen. Take one article of this national "Confession of Faith," that

speaks of human equality and of God-given rights of man: "We hold these truths to be self evident :—That all men are created equal ; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights ; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." These are wonderful words. Say not that no beam of Divine light came to the mind that uttered these Divine thoughts ! How the sound of these potent words has rolled like eloquent thunder from State to State, from East to West and from North to South, till dull is the ear that has not heard it ! Nor was there *thunder* alone in these words. There was *lightning* in them, and the lightning has struck, shivering iron bonds (for lightning loves to strike iron) till the last slave is free ! This is the effect of a political creed, illuminating, energizing and inspiring the people, and burning in their hearts, till it burned its way out in terrible action. We believe the "Declaration" hastened emancipation a whole generation.

But the creed of the church, and particularly the Methodist Church, hastened the same grand consummation. Note the effect of a single fragment of a creed on Slavery in the Methodist Episcopal Church of the United States. In the "General Rules" of the Church, which are of the nature of a Creed, were found a few simple words, seemingly very innocent, on the subject of slavery. Among the things forbidden is "*the buying and selling of men, women, and children, with the intention to enslave them.*" There it stood in the "Discipline" of the Church for nearly three quarters of a century, by its God-given logic and all-persuasive rhetoric, anchoring the storm-tossed Church to the Rock of Eternal Truth. How "Conservative" men and "border" men quibbled and winced and struggled ! But there was the the principle of imperish-

able truth recorded as a part of the Church Creed or Discipline and there it staid, preaching and persuading, invincible as an armed angel of light, till at last, with its two-edged sword, it cut the quivering Church in twain from the Atlantic to the Rocky Mountains.

Thus ever has it been and ever will it be. A great scriptural truth, adopted and recorded by the assembled Church ever exerts, and must exert, a potent influence on the theories, lives and destinies of men. Who may estimate the mighty influence of the creeds of the Christian churches, as heaven's artillery, aimed at the follies and crimes of individuals, communities and nations ?

(8.) *To reject all Creeds, religious and secular, rather than liberating and liberalizing man, as is claimed, plunges him into darkness, doubt, absurdity and barbarism.*

Nothing but lofty creeds, religious, political and scientific, clearly defined and strongly maintained, can keep men from dropping back into ignorance, superstition and barbarism.

What is it to reject all creeds but to reject all beliefs ? And what is it to reject all belief, but to deny all certitude ? And what is it to deny all certitude, but to deny that man has moral eyes to see moral truth ; or, that having eyes, there is no truth to see ? And what is all this but to deny man's moral responsibility, and to license all folly, all sin, and all blasphemy ? The sure way to degrade a man, and to send him reeling down toward ruin, is to insinuate *doubts* respecting all religious teaching and teachers and all moral truth ; while the sure way to lift a man up from degradation, is *first* to make him *believe* something—believe it intensely and steadfastly. Doubt is weakness—doubt paralyzes the will and is the mother of all evil. No one can estimate the mischief wrought by the New Academy of Athens in propagating the doctrine of doubt.

Carneades, the founder of the New Academy, was a professed and professional doubter on all questions of right and wrong, justice and injustice, truth and error. Having been sent to Rome as an Ambassador, he attracted great attention and admiration by a splendid oration on the subject of "Justice." All Rome was stirred by the magnificence of his Rhetoric, Logic and Oratory. And so he was invited to deliver a second oration. Whereupon he gave an equally brilliant address, eulogizing injustice, and showing that *expediency* is better than justice—using arguments the most specious and eloquence the most charming and irresistible to prove his positions. At this point in the proceedings, noble Cato, ever zealous for the morals of the people, became alarmed, believing that the public mind would be corrupted by such an exhibition of plausible arguments for immorality and injustice, as well as for morality and justice. He accordingly moved in the Senate that Carneades be expelled from Rome as a dangerous man. And Cato was right. The greatest calamity of a people is not fire, or plague, or famine, but *doubt* respecting the sanctity and majesty and eternity of Truth and Right.

Our City Council then was right in refusing last week the use of the City Hall to a blasphemous trifle and Apostrophe of Doubt. Let any calamity come upon us rather than the calamity of doubt and suspicion respecting the sanctities and verities of our Holy Christianity!

(9.) *To reject all Creeds, written and unwritten, and yet retain manhood, is impossible.*

They who affect to discard all collective creeds, themselves contend for some private creed. Now before they exhort us to reject *our* creeds, let them be consistent and reject *their own*. But will they throw away their creeds? Do they not contend as earnestly for their creeds as we

for ours? Even Theodore Parker, the prince of creed-killers, could not throw away his creed, without throwing away himself. He had his religious creed in the form of unwritten religious intuitions—"instinctive intuitions" as he called them. Nor did he fail to *write* and *publish* his "intuitions," and contend, with all his might for this written creed or "Confession of Faith;" thus doing the very thing against which he continually hurled the shafts of his fiery rhetoric.

(10.) *A creed adopted by the assembled wisdom of the Church, is more likely to be trustworthy than the creed of an individual, though he be a minister and theologian.*

We have seen that the people need some brief statement of the central vital doctrines of the Bible. Shall this statement be made by the individual minister? But he may be unskillful and unsafe in analyzing Bible truth and constructing a creed at once scriptural and adapted to the exigencies of the times. For while the power to instruct and edify the Church is not a rare gift, this power of analyzing and generalizing is a rare gift. Moreover individuals are often eccentric. Large bodies are seldom eccentric. The consequence is that in those so-called "Christian" churches, in which there is no formal creed, minister and people become vague in their views of saving truth, and degenerate into inextricable confusion of doctrine. An erratic, audacious, self-conceited, imprudent and dogmatic minister—unchecked by any confederated church authority, or solemnly announced creed, can do more harm than can be successfully antagonized by ten ministers who are his superiors in everything but his audacity.

(11.) *Written creeds are authorized by Scripture, precept and example.*

In the early history of the Church, a special case occurred in which it became necessary for the Church at Jerusalem to adopt and publish a creed or dogma, in order to check certain growing heresies respecting the rights and duties of Jews joining the Christian church. Paul and Barabas were commissioned to carry the "degrees,"—[original "dogmata," or "dogmas," so much decried by our "liberal" friends] to the various churches in Asia Minor. If it be objected that this creed was the more defensible because issued by inspired apostles, it must be remembered that the whole body of elders or Church authorities were in session with the apostle, and were equally concerned in this issuing of a creed. Indeed, this seems designed as a precedent for the Church to guide in all similar cases of heresies which are liable to occur in the history of the Church. Moreover, the Apostle Paul, II Tim. 1:13, tells Timothy to hold fast "*the form of sound words.*" The word "*hypotyposis*"—here rendered "form"—means a "sketch" or "outline," and is the very word used by the classic writers to designate the "outline" or "compend" of any system of philosophy or theology. Such a form or compend, we have seen is necessary, and is alluded to in other places in the apostolic writings. That such a form or creed was used by the apostles is, moreover, rendered probable from the indisputable fact that such creeds were used in the earliest and purest period of the history of the church. And it is by no means improbable that the creed now called the "Apostles' Creed" grew out of the forms used by the Apostles themselves, and that though changed, it yet contains substantially what Paul, Peter and John "once delivered to the saints."

(12.) *Belief in a creed is, in the Scriptures made the absolute condition of personal salvation.*

The Church is commanded to go into all the world, "preach the gospel to every creature," and to "teach all nations"—not the minutiae of Bible history and doctrine, but the grand "outline," the "form of sound words"—the central, saving truths of the gospel. And then it is added: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned!" Skeptics may wince and dispute about the injustice or absurdity of this wondrous promise and this supremely dreadful threat—but there it stands!—sculptured in the very rock of eternal truth! This is the testimony of a single text, and might leave room for doubt in a skeptic's mind. But invoke all the evangelists, all the apostles, and the Lord himself, as witnesses, and you hear from their lips and pen, in a thousand varied forms, the same tremendous truth: "Believe and live!" "Disbelieve and die!"

The need of belief in a creed, then, is proved by the Scripture but the same need is proved by reason, experience, and common sense, for

(13.). *In making a belief in a creed thus vital, by echoing the awful words of our Lord, "he that believeth not shall be damned," we do but announce a principle that finds its perfect parallel in temporal concerns.*

Belief of and in a creed is necessary to self-preservation. Science, physiology, political economy—all human philosophy—have developed principles (or creeds) which men must believe or die! Science has found creeds written on the tissues of the human body, written on the human mind, and written on all nature about us, which men must believe or suffer the penalty, physical, intellectual and national.

Belief is a necessity of our nature, and is the first step toward a rescue from every peril. When a man has a disease—deadly, if not cured--the first step toward a cure is to believe he has the disease. He must believe or die!

When he is told of a remedy absolutely infallible, if taken immediately, he must believe or die ! Now this disease of the body fitly symbolizes the disease of the soul ; this remedy fitly symbolizes the all-healing gospel, in which men must trust or die.

This principle is universal ; belief is the first step out of every peril and every evil, physical, intellectual or national.

When the intemperate man is wasting with alcoholic disease, even the anti-creed "liberal" Christian will not hesitate to read or tell to him the creed of temperance and then insist that he must believe or die !

When a man, wasting with intellectual and physical indolence, hears the secular gospel of labor, he must believe or die ! When a people spread over a continent, hear freedom's sublime creed, they may hesitate and doubt, but they must believe or die !

When a nation hears the voice of heaven-born justice as she proclaims her solemn creed, that nation must believe or die ! Who has not heard the muttering thunder of the oppressed peoples of earth as they voice the holy creed of freedom and of justice ? Let Tyrants and Oppressors beware ! for they must believe that creed or die !

(14). *A Christian Creed mixed with some error—is better than skepticism mixed with some truth.*

Granted, that no other foundation than Christ can be laid ; granted, that a man building on this foundation a creed containing any "wood, hay and stubble" of error, shall be "scarcely saved," saved as "through fire ;" better be on the rock Christ Jesus, with a creed containing some sectarian "wood, hay and stubble," than to build "gold, silver and precious stones," on the sandy foundation of skepticism ! Better be "scarcely saved" than not saved at all !

"Give me a creed that shows me the Almighty Saviour,

though it be 'as through a glass darkly,' " rather than the most gorgeous philosophy that reveals no Christ.

One faint ray of light from the hallowed Cross is worth more to light my feet in the path to immortality, than all the light of all human wisdom.

May God help us to believe and be saved for His Name's Sake ! Amen !

ell Don

rather than the
Christ.

Cross is worth
sacrifice, than all

saved for His

