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Creeds.

As the primitive Christians had no creed by which to be governed in matters of faith and practice save that which was of divine authority, they were not troubled with the discussions and revisions of human creeds. When they accepted the word of God and that alone as their standard of rectitude they had a creed that was not only absolutely safe to follow but one that was perfectly adapted to their natures, proper education and wants under all circumstances and during all time, and which thoroughly furnished the man of God unto all good works. Hence such a creed needed no revision, and a proposal to that effect would not only have been regarded by the disciples of Christ as an idle tale, but as an act of open rebellion against the government of Heaven. They had a creed that contained all the articles of faith and points of doctrine pertaining to the salvation of fallen men, and which was sufficiently plain to guide them into all things necessary to be done both as saints and sinners in order to the remission of their sins and their ultimate glorification in heaven. They needed no other creed, they wanted no other. By this creed they were willing to live, those who walked according to its teachings were not afraid to die, and by it they were willing to be judged at the last day. Such was the simplicity of Apostolic Christianity, and such should be the lives and the motto of all Christians to-day.

But the depraved and rebellious nature of man was not long satisfied with the simplicity of God's system, hence a few soon set about to devise ways and means that were more in harmony with their mode of thinking and plan of operation. The Christ had ascended to his Father and his personal influence was no longer felt to the same extent among them, the apostles had died, and hence could not lift up their voices of warning against sin and departures as they had once done, the days of miracles and of the spiritual gifts had ceased and a few hundred years passed away and men began to make creeds for themselves and for

the people and thus to call upon other gods. Thus little by little they drifted away from apostolic ground on which they had been firmly established by Christ and the inspired teachers, bound the churches hand and foot by the fetters of human creeds and confessions of faith, and in this way covered up and made void the teachings and commandments of Jesus Christ by their own traditions until the Dark Ages, the Pope and the Inquisition were the culmination of this fearful apostasy. But this state of things was only for a time. A few more centuries rolled by and the grand reformation with Luther and others at its head was ushered in, and as a result of this effort, the Bible was again put into the hands of the people. For awhile the Protestant world was seemingly united against Romanism in all its shameful and degrading forms; but still one of the essential features of a successful reformation was yet lacking, the idea of human creeds had not been destroyed. Hence when the fierce conflict between Protestantism and Popery had abated and was about to result in a glorious victory for the former, men began again to make creeds. The Protestant world mistaking a successful victory in behalf of Protestantism for a complete surrender of Romanism, began casting about them for other things with which to occupy their time and attention. Prominent among these was the reconstruction of creeds. Protestants were not satisfied with their opposition to the system of Romanism, but as the hottest of the battle was now over and as new ideas and interpretations of Scripture sprang up among them, and different phases of dogmatic theology began to assume a more definite shape, they conceived the idea of division among themselves. Opinions were shaped into articles of faith, and each new article was made the basis of division. The party spirit grew till those who had gone out from Babylon began to divide up among themselves. Daughters and grand-daughters were born unto the spiritual Mother, and this process of division and multiplication has gone on till all the existing sects with their respective formulated creeds present themselves to our view as a solemn reality. These sectional lines were so tightly drawn that Christian fellowship and cooperation among the differ-

ent denominations was not deemed either a necessity or a virtue. Each sect had its pen, and in this pen its members must stay. No one dared call in question an article of his creed or to lift up his voice in the true spirit of investigation. His hands were chained, his mouth was locked and thus he became a mental and moral slave to his party and his master—the human creed.

But there is another feature to this question, and it is this that we wish to make most prominent. It has come to pass during the last few years that some men and churches have become tired of their creeds, and have broke loose from them, declaring themselves free men and free churches. During the year of 1882 this has been especially noticeable. Several prominent theologians have declared themselves dissatisfied with their respective creeds and have even gone out from the denominations with which they stood identified. This disposition characterized by an unusual degree of boldness is becoming more apparent every day, and looking simply at this feature of the question, all is very well.

But some of our contemporaries have taken up these facts and held them up to the world as a striking example of a return to New Testament Christianity and Christian union upon the Bible alone. In the January number of the *North American Review* a discussion on the "Revision of Creeds" was commenced by Newman Smyth, Lyman Abbott and Henry Ward Beecher. The discussion is continued in the Feb. number by other able writers. From a few admissions made by some of these writers which seem to favor the abandonment of creeds, some have thought that these men are making rapid strides towards the grand and the Scripture principles for which we as a people plead. But it occurs to us that these papers have overlooked one of the leading characteristics of these articles and have fallen into a dangerous fallacy. We greatly fear that they have mistaken the rejection of human creeds on the part of a few as positive evidence of their acceptance of the New Testament and a closer adherence to its teachings. This does not necessarily follow. Indeed the course of some of these men is a living witness to the contrary. Progressive theologians of the nineteenth century not only abandon creeds as being too narrow

for their broad and cultivated intellects, but they abandon the Bible as well; and just here lies the secret of the whole matter. Take Mr. Beecher for example. Is it not a fact that his abandonment of creeds is simply another name for liberalism? As he goes out from his old church and creed his utterances become more and more characterized by liberalism and infidelity, and it should be remembered that he is only a sample of a large class who are drifting in the same direction.

Let our scribes study these articles of the *Review* more closely, and we think they will find that those whose faith in the positive utterances of the Bible remains unshaken, taking Howard Crosby as a representative of that class, are perfectly satisfied with their old creeds, while those who clamor loudest for a revision or the destruction of creeds are running clear past Jerusalem. While then we rejoice in the fact that uninspired creeds are losing their influence over the minds and consciences of the people, we confess that we have but little faith in Beecherism as an indication of a speedy return to the teachings of Christ and the apostles.

Worldliness in the Church.

We think the time has fully come for preachers and papers to speak out on worldliness in the churches of Christ; and as the following extract from an able article on this subject by Bro. J. T. Toof, of Quincy Ill, in the *Christian Quarterly Review* so nearly expresses our thoughts and is so well said, we give it here to our readers:

It is largely because we practically, in a multitude of cases, make the Church a common beggar, by soliciting of the world alms for her sustenance, that the masses of the people outside of the Church have seriously concluded she is weak, non-self-supporting, and, consequently, surely not divine. Why should God create a kingdom to overthrow the kingdom of Satan, and then draw from Satan's purse the means required to sustain it in its work? The supposition of such a thing must be offensive to Him who secured for us the blessings of this kingdom at the tremendous cost of the life of "His only son." Such royalty of origin and such incalculably rich price of purchase certainly forbid the assumption, even for a moment, that the Church of God must depend, in any manner whatever, on the generosity of its enemies.

The world also regards even "the songs of Zion" as impossible in the Church, but for the helping hand