**TRADITION AND CREEDS**

Perhaps you have heard the story about the man who wanted to know why his wife cut the end of the ham she was preparing to bake. She said her mother always did that. Mother said that grandmother always did it. And grandmother, shaking her head as memory spanned the years, said yes, she always did that -- because she did not own a roasting pan large enough to hold the whole ham. That illustrates the meaning of “tradition bound.”

There are church members, just as tightly and foolishly bound to doctrinal conclusions of the past; with less real historic reason for their faith, and no Bible reason at all. We may be unaware of the fact that most denominations of our day no longer hold to their “creeds” as they once did. They couldn’t care less about conforming to this or that traditional doctrine. But “we” -- who so long fought “creeds” – are threatened by the same spirit we once condemned.

A “creed” need not be written by a “council” and formally accepted with a pledge of allegiance. It can be any “belief” (*credo* is Latin for “I believe”) which we accept as the final authority in a matter, and by which we judge and fellowship, or refuse to fellowship others.

We urge people to “have convictions” and to stand by them. This is not the same as saying, however, that what one believes is the divine standard. We must leave the “rule” where God put it -- in His word; and be as willing to have our own conclusions measured by that rule, as we are anxious to measure others by that rule.

The radical mind may plunge recklessly after “something new,” and the reactionary mind may seek to bind where God has not bound, but these extremes do not stamp the “mainstream of the movement” with authority. In fact, creeds form in such mainstreams and are given strength there. It is there that “majority opinions” are framed into “church doctrine” and become “law” in the minds of the creed-bound. It is the “great middle section” that frowns upon private investigation, and refuses to study issues in the light of God’s word. It might “rock the boat” of their serenity.

Stuff About Things, Robert Turner, Plain Talk, April 1971