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THE FLYING SPIDER—OBSERVATIONS BY JONATHAN EDWARDS WHEN A BOY.

FROM AN UNPUBLISHED MANUSCRIPT.

[With Facsimiles. See Frontispiece.]

PROFESSOR ALLEN, in his recent interesting and helpful rendering of the life and thoughts of Jonathan Edwards, notices, with other indications of early intellectual promise, his "elaborate and instructive account of the habits of the field spider, based upon his own observations," and written, it is supposed, before he was thirteen years of age.

Earlier writers have been equally impressed by the significance of this production. Dr. Sereno E. Dwight, who first brought it to light, and published with it a letter in which the youthful naturalist modestly apologizes for sending his observations to some foreign correspondent of his father's, repeatedly refers to it as evincing remarkable "mental superiority." . . . "Rare indeed," he says, "is the instance, in which the attention of such a boy"—eleven or twelve years of age—"has been so far arrested, by any of the interesting phenomena in either of the kingdoms of nature, that he has been led, without prompting and without aid, to pursue a series of exact observations and discoveries as to the facts themselves; to search out their causes; and as the result of the whole, to draw up and present a lucid, systematic, and well-digested report of his investigations. . . . Perhaps it may be questioned whether higher evidence of a mature and

have taken their meals in their rooms. It was recently decided that this plan needlessly deprived them of an opportunity for social intercourse and training, and a large dining-room has been made ready in which they now dine together. Preparations will soon be completed for a manual training school. It is to follow the methods of the best schools of the kind, and in time will include all the common trades. This addition will make the reformatory's facilities for developing industrial skill in its men practically complete.

*Robert A. Woods.*

ANDOVER.

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## REVISION OF THE WESTMINSTER CONFESSION.<sup>1</sup>

THE revision of the Westminster Confession is a theme that is now absorbing the attention and stirring the hearts of Presbyterian churches throughout the world. For revision is no local or temporary movement. It is a product of the evolution of Christian life and thought in our century. It is the swell on the wave of the advancing tide of Christianity that is sweeping on not only the Presbyterian Church, but all denominations of Christians, towards the realization of the grand ideals of Christian truth, unity, and perfection.

The revision movement started in this country without leadership, and it has puzzled the leaders of the church to keep abreast of it. It has been accompanied by changes of attitude and surprises. It was at first a child's cry for relief that excited sympathy all over our land. It was but a spark last April. In May, the General Assembly started the flame that has spread like fire upon a prairie, and now the whole church is ablaze. It is one of those movements that are long in preparing, and that suddenly burst forth with irresistible might and omnipotent energy. We are in the beginnings of a theological reformation that can no more be resisted than the flow of a great river.

### I. REVISION AND THE SCRIPTURES.

A venerable divine has recently said that the fundamental question in the revision movement is whether the Confession is in

<sup>1</sup> This article was delivered as an address before the Presbyterian Union of New York. It has the form of an address rather than an article. It has been enlarged, and many notes have been added.

accord with the Scriptures. This is the question that Parliament asked the Westminster divines when they sent up the Confession of Faith, December 4, 1646, after five months' labor. They demanded proof-texts for every statement before they would take it into consideration.<sup>1</sup> Accordingly the divines went to work on the proofs, and labored until April 26, 1647, upon them. The Westminster divines set a bad example to their successors, which they followed too well; for it has been the habit of divines to construct their dogmas by logical deductions, and then seek support for them in the Scriptures. If the Westminster divines had put the Scriptures first, their definitions might have been more Scriptural.

One of the greatest improvements in modern theology has been the development of the discipline of Biblical theology. The theology of the Confession was made, not from teachings of Scripture alone, but also by deductions from Biblical statements that cannot be admitted into a system of Biblical theology. The theology of the Confession is a system of speculative theology based on the Scriptures. If one could change it into a system of Biblical theology, it would be as great a transformation as one sees when he removes from America to Europe.

We assume that the Westminster system is based on the Scriptures, and that its essential and necessary articles are in harmony with the Scriptures. But there are many unessential and unnecessary articles that are not in accord with the Scriptures. There are other important doctrines that are in the Scriptures and are not in the Confession. An advance in the study of the Bible is the nerve of the revision movement.

## II. THE CHURCH HAS CHANGED ITS ATTITUDE.

The issue between the friends and foes of revision is fairly and squarely stated when it is said that it depends altogether upon the question whether the Presbyterian Church has changed its attitude toward the Confession or not. I shall endeavor to convince you that the church has changed its attitude, and that this change has been thorough. It is all the more startling that this change has taken place silently, gradually, and unconsciously, so that it was not recognized until it was forced upon our attention. You will

<sup>1</sup> Baillie writes: "Our Assemblée, with much adoe, at last have wrestled through the whole Confession and all is now printed. The House of Commons requires us to put scripture to it before they take it into consideration; and what time that will take up, who knows?" — *Letters and Journals*, ii. 415.

not be surprised that the dogmatic divines have unconsciously led the church away from the Standards when I call your attention to the fact that there are more than eight hundred titles of books and tracts written by the Westminster divines, the authors of the Standards, and, so far as one can tell from the copious indexes of the systems of theology taught in our theological seminaries, the authors have not used a single one of them. The great divines who composed the Confession of Faith, and who are the best guides to its interpretation, have not been considered worthy of mention. It is very remarkable that all their other writings should be laid aside as worthless, and this one product of their brains should be exalted above all other human compositions.

The Westminster Confession was composed by the Westminster Assembly two hundred and forty-three years ago. This Assembly was called by the Parliament of England. It was designed to embrace moderate men of all parties, selected from all the counties of England and Wales. Ireland was represented by its Archbishop and the Professor of Divinity at Dublin. Scotland was represented by its ablest divines. The Episcopal party was represented by one archbishop, two bishops, several masters of colleges, and a number of choice scholars. The Independents were represented by seven of the strongest men of their party. No such fairly representative body of divines was ever before or since convened in Great Britain. It was a splendid plan to unite all parties in the three national churches of Great Britain about common symbols.<sup>1</sup> But, unfortunately, the king would not allow the Episcopal divines to attend, and the Assembly, with the Long Parliament, soon expelled the Episcopal party. The Presbyterian majority were intolerant toward the Congregational minority, so that, while the dissenting brethren struggled heroically for their views in the Assembly, the hostility of the Presbyterian party became so great that John Goodwin and Henry Burton, the only two pastors of London churches who were Independents, were deprived of their charges.<sup>2</sup> And so the Westminster Symbols be-

<sup>1</sup> Each one solemnly swore that he would "endeavour to bring the churches of God in the three kingdoms to the nearest conjunction and uniformity in religion, confession of faith, form of Church Government, directory for worship, and catechising, that we and our posterity after us, may as brethren live in faith and love, and the Lord may delight to dwell in the midst of us."

<sup>2</sup> Baillie writes, July 8, 1645: "Blessed be God, all the ministers of London are for us. Burton and Goodwin, the only two that were Independent, are by the Parliament removed from their places. Seven or eight preachers that are against our way are only lecturers in the city, but not ministers." — *Letters and Journals*, ii. 299.

come the banners of the Presbyterian party. What, then, do we see at the present time? The Westminster Confession has been rejected by all of the historical churches of England. It is held only by the Presbyterian Church of England, a small church, composed chiefly of Scottish and Irish families residing in England. In Ireland, it is the symbol only of the Presbyterians of the North. It is a national creed in Scotland alone. It is used only by Presbyterians in America and the colonies. Nine tenths of the Protestants of Great Britain and America do not adhere to the Westminster Confession. It has failed in its design of displacing the Thirty-nine Articles. It has not become the one creed of Great Britain. This is the verdict of history on the Westminster Confession.

The Westminster Confession was completed December 4, 1646. Two hundred and forty-three years have passed, years fraught with change and great movements in philosophy, in science, in art, in commerce, in industry, and in society. Everything has changed since the seventeenth century. And yet there are some who think that theology has not changed. Our Saviour promised his disciples the gift of the divine Spirit to guide them into all truth. Christian history shows that the reigning Christ has fulfilled his promise. The church advanced through the Christian centuries in religion, in doctrine, and in morals, down to the year 1646. The Reformation was a wonderful revival and advance in Christianity. The second Reformation was a still further advance. The Westminster Confession gives us the high-water mark of progress up to the year 1646. Did our Saviour fulfill his promise up to that date and then forget it? Has the Holy Spirit been withdrawn from the world since the seventeenth century? God forbid! I have sometimes thought that our ultra-conservative friends do not believe in the Holy Ghost. They doubtless believe that He is the third person of the Trinity, but they have no practical faith in his presence and power in the church of the day. They doubt his power to assure men of the divine authority of the Scriptures. They have no confidence in his guidance in the evolutions of Christian theology in our century. These brethren are mistaken. The divine Spirit has been more active in the past three centuries than ever before. There never has been a period in which the church has made such rapid strides forward as in the past one hundred years. We are on the march to-day. Swiftly the columns advance. It is the quickness of the movement, the suddenness of the transition, that is making

it clear that we have all departed from the line of battle of 1646 ; and that our detachments are in movement in different stages of evolution to take up their position in the new line of battle that our Saviour King has assigned for the twentieth Christian century.

The Westminster Assembly prepared six different documents, and fortified them all with proof-texts. What have we done with them? The Synod of New York and Philadelphia, in 1788, swept these proof-texts all away. A committee appointed at a later date added proofs to the doctrinal standards, but in such a slovenly way that their work is not entitled to the slightest consideration or respect.<sup>1</sup> These texts are no part of the Constitution as it was adopted, and published by authority of the Synod.

The Form of Government, Directory of Worship, and Directory of Ordination were all discarded. New documents were composed and adopted in their stead. The American Synod did not venture to add proof-texts to them, for they definitely abandoned the *jure divino* theory of church government and worship, and established themselves on the ground of Christian expediency.

The Confession was revised in three chapters,<sup>2</sup> and the American doctrine of church and state was substituted for the Westminster doctrine. Such a revision of the Westminster standards was revolutionary. But our Presbyterian fathers had passed through a political revolution, and they did not hesitate to make an ecclesiastical revolution. The only reason that they did not make a doctrinal revolution was because they were not theologians, and doctrines were not in debate.

It is necessary for us to put ourselves in the circumstances of the seventeenth century in order to realize the marvelous change that has taken place in the Presbyterian churches since that time. It would have seemed very strange to Westminster divines that their children in the nineteenth century should think doctrine so much more important than practice. It would have surprised them that later Presbyterians could throw away all their work in church government and worship, and then stand back in horror at the thought of touching the articles of faith. Baillie, a member of the Assembly, tells us : "The hearts of the divines here who are wise, both of the Assemblée and city and elsewhere, are set only on the point of government. We are going on in the

<sup>1</sup> See Historical Note, by S. T. Lowrie, *Presbyterian Review*, July, 1888.

<sup>2</sup> These chapters are : xx. 4, which was amended by omission of a clause ; xxiii. 3, xxxi. 1, which were entirely remodeled.

Assemble with the Confession, and could if need were shortly end it. We are preparing for the catechise; but we think all is for little purpose till the government be set up.”<sup>1</sup> This was the opinion of the Westminster divines. But in these times it is thought that government and worship are for little purpose till our doctrines are set up. Baillie describes some of the work of Presbyterians in 1644, as follows: “Paul’s and Westminster are purged of their images and organs, and all which gave offence. My Lord Manchester made two fair bonfires of such trinkets at Cambridge.”<sup>2</sup> He describes a procession of lords and commons, mayor, aldermen, and Westminster Assembly passing along Cheapside in London, where a great bonfire “of many fine pictures of Christ and the saints, of reliets, beads and such trinkets” were blazing at a place “where Christ’s rich cross used to stand.”<sup>3</sup> He depicts a Fast service, with three prayers two hours each, two sermons an hour each, besides two short prayers at the beginning and the end, a short address and two psalms, consuming, in all, more than eight hours.<sup>4</sup> December 2, 1645, he writes: “The Independents here plead for a toleration both for themselves and other sects. . . . We hope God will assist us to remonstrate against the wickedness of such a toleration.”<sup>5</sup>

This was Presbyterianism two hundred and forty-four years ago. The burning of organs and pictures of Jesus Christ, the refusal of toleration to Episcopalians, Congregationalists, and Baptists, fasts frequent and severe, sermons and prayers of intolerable length, psalm-singing the only sacred song,—all these things are an abomination to us. We thank God we do not live in such times, and in the society of such Presbyterians.

<sup>1</sup> *Letters and Journals*, ii. 336. January 15, 1646.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, ii. 130. February 18, 1644.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, ii. 134.

<sup>4</sup> “So we spent nine to five very graciously. After Dr. Twisse had begun with a briefe prayer, Mr. Marshall prayed large two houres, most divinely, confessing the sins of the members of the Assemblie, in a wonderfullie patheticke, and prudent way. After, Mr. Arrowsmith preached one houre, then a psalme; thereafter Mr. Vines prayed near two houres, and Mr. Palmer preached one houre, and Mr. Seaman prayed near two houres, then a psalme. After, Mr. Hendersone brought them to a short sweet conference of the heart confessed in the Assemblie, and other seen faults, to be remedied, and the conveniencie to preach against all sects, especiallie Anabaptists and Antinomians. Dr. Twisse closed with a short prayer and blessing.”—*Ibid.*, ii. 184, 185.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, ii. 328.



## III. THE SYSTEMS COMPARED.

I shall present to you evidence to show that the Presbyterian churches have changed in doctrine likewise, and that the proportions of the Westminster systems are not held by our divines. The dogmatic divines are excessive in their elaboration of the first eleven chapters of the Confession. They neglect the middle group of eleven chapters; they depart from the chapters on the church and the sacraments, and they are in great perplexity as regards the two closing chapters on Eschatology.<sup>1</sup> I have made a careful comparison of the Westminster Confession, the new Articles of the Presbyterian Church of England, the systems of Dr. Charles Hodge and Dr. Shedd, have reduced them to common factors, and found the proportions of treatment of all the topics of the Confession. (See Table, pp. 52, 53.)

It is evident from this table that the proportions of the faith in the Westminster Confession have entirely changed. New doctrines have come into the field, old doctrines have been discarded; some doctrines have been depressed, other doctrines have been exalted. The systems are different in their structure, in their order of material, in the material itself, in its proportions, and in the structural principles. The essential and necessary articles of about one half of the Westminster system are in these systems, but the other half, with its essential articles, is not there.

## IV. DECLINE FROM THE WESTMINSTER CONFESSION.

Two of the grandest chapters in the Confession of Faith are the Scriptures, chapter i., and Justification, chapter xi. These express the two great principles of Protestantism, after a long conflict between Romanism and Puritanism from 1517 to 1646. They are the finest statements of the Protestant faith. After the English revolution the conflict with Rome ceased, and the principles of Protestantism sank in relative importance. In the eighteenth century Biblical studies died away in Great Britain,<sup>2</sup> and the doctrine of Justification was supplanted by the doctrine of Regeneration.<sup>3</sup> The current theology is not in accord with the Westminster doctrine of the Scriptures, because it lays stress on extra confessional doctrines, such as verbal inspiration

<sup>1</sup> See Briggs's *Whither*, chap. viii. Charles Scribner's Sons.

<sup>2</sup> See Briggs's *Biblical Study*, p. 209.

<sup>3</sup> Briggs's *American Presbyterianism*, p. 260.



TABLE OF COMPARISONS.

Westminster Confession.	Articles Presbyterian Ch. Eng.	Dr. Hodge.	Dr. Shedd.
1. Holy Scripture . . . . .	82 <sup>a</sup>	128	129
2. a. God . . . . .	55	183	225
b. The Holy Trinity . . . . .	37	68	122
3. God's Eternal Decree . . . . .	64	41	100
4. Creation . . . . .	22	64	255
5. Providence . . . . .	65	73	29
6. Fall of Man, Sin, and Punishment thereof . . . . .	35	82	115
7. God's Covenant with Man . . . . .	56	64 <sup>b</sup>	22
8. Christ the Mediator . . . . .	92	211 <sup>c</sup>	191
9. Free Will . . . . .	28	—	24
10. Effectual Calling . . . . .	40	220 <sup>d</sup>	96
11. Justification . . . . .	49	46	72
12. Adoption . . . . .	14	46	—
13. Sanctification . . . . .	25	—	34
14. Saving Faith . . . . .	27	—	53 <sup>e</sup>
15. Repentance unto Life . . . . .	38	—	—
16. Good Works . . . . .	70	46	—
17. Perseverance . . . . .	29	92 <sup>f</sup>	—
18. Assurance . . . . .	56	—	—
19. Law of God . . . . .	71	—	151 <sup>g</sup>
20. Christian Liberty . . . . .	60	—	—
21. Worship and the Sabbath . . . . .	82	—	15
22. Oaths and Vows . . . . .	60	—	—
23. Civil Magistrate . . . . .	60	—	—
24. Marriage and Divorce . . . . .	45	—	—
25. Church . . . . .	41	—	—
26. Communion of Saints . . . . .	28	101	—
27. Sacraments . . . . .	33	—	30
28. Baptism . . . . .	43	128	62
29. Lord's Supper . . . . .	82	—	58
30. Church Censures . . . . .	30	92	—
31. Synods and Councils . . . . .	38	—	—
32. a. State of Man after Death . . . . .	15	18	42
b. Resurrection of the Dead . . . . .	11	37	14
33. Last Judgment . . . . .	34	138	65
	1630	1632	1621
			1631 <sup>h</sup>

<sup>a</sup> These articles place the Scripture between the Church and the Sacraments as Article XIX.

<sup>b</sup> These articles substitute an article on Saving Grace for the Westminster doctrine of the Covenants.

<sup>c</sup> These articles greatly enlarge and improve Christology, by giving three articles on the Lord Jesus Christ, the Works of Christ, and the Exaltation of Christ.

<sup>d</sup> These articles improve the doctrine of Effectual Calling by substituting for the Westminster chapter three articles, on the Gospel, the Holy Spirit, and Regeneration. Dr. Hodge discusses the subject under the heads of Vocation and Regeneration. Dr. Shedd treats it under the head of Regeneration.

*e* This chapter in Dr. Hodge covers the whole subject of Faith, and is devoted chiefly to justifying faith rather than the matter in the Confession included under Saving Faith. Dr. Shedd treats of Faith under the head of Conversion, but does not go into the specific features of the Westminster definition.

*f* This article endeavors to sum up Christian life under this head, and embraces material corresponding with several previous and subsequent chapters of the Confession. Drs. Hodge and Shedd treat of Perseverance in connection with other doctrines.

*g* Dr. Hodge, under this head, expounds the ten commandments somewhat after the manner of the Larger Catechism.

*h* These figures are not absolutely correct, for fractions have not been considered. Furthermore, the different terms used, and the arrangement of the material in the systems, make it difficult to be exact in the estimation of subordinate matters. It can be relied on for purposes of general survey and comparative estimation. The pages of Drs. Hodge and Shedd and the lines of the Articles of the Presbyterian Church of England have been brought to the measurement of the Westminster Confession.

and inerrancy.<sup>1</sup> It substitutes the authority of tradition and human authors for the authority of the Holy Spirit speaking in the Scriptures to the believers. I agree to every sentence and word of the Westminster doctrine of the Scriptures, but I denounce the current doctrines as contra-confessional, and as changing the base of the Reformation.<sup>2</sup>

Furthermore, the current theology is not in accord with the Westminster doctrine of Justification, for it pushes aside the forgiveness of sins,<sup>3</sup> makes acceptance with God a mere judicial affair, and recognizes that the majority of the redeemed are saved without personal faith. How can the Westminster doctrine of Justification stand when dogmatic divines leave the doctrine of forgiveness of sin in such obscurity in their systems that they themselves think it unnecessary to put the term Forgiveness of Sin in their indexes,<sup>4</sup> and when they teach that only a small por-

<sup>1</sup> Drs. A. A. Hodge and Warfield go so far as to say that "a proved error in Scripture contradicts not only our doctrine, but the Scripture claims, and therefore its inspiration in making these claims.—*Presbyterian Review*, ii. 245.

<sup>2</sup> See Briggs's *Whither*, pp. 73 seq.

<sup>3</sup> See Simon's *Redemption of Man*, pp. 280, 281.

<sup>4</sup> Forgiveness of Sin and Pardon of Sin are not found in the indexes of the systems of Dr. Shedd, Dr. Charles Hodge, and Dr. A. A. Hodge.

The Remission of Sins is found in Dr. Shedd's index referring to a single passage, ii. 392. Here the author takes the position that "forgiveness is the non-infliction of suffering upon the transgressor." "The release or non-infliction of penalty is forgiveness in the Biblical representation." . . . Dr. A. A. Hodge says: "God cannot forgive sin in any case; the sinner may be forgiven,

tion of the saved are really justified by faith?<sup>1</sup> Here is one of the difficulties of the Revision movement. The statements of the Westminster Confession on the principles of the Reformation are a thousandfold better than anything we could get from the dogmatic divines of our day.

The Puritan Reformation was a grand movement in Great Britain, which carried British life and thought beyond the highest point reached by the churches of the continent. The principles of Puritanism are set forth in the middle group of chapters of the Westminster Confession, treating of Adoption, Sanctification, Saving Faith, Repentance unto Life, Good Works, Perseverance of the Saints, Assurance of Grace, Law of God, Liberty of Conscience, Religious Worship, Lawful Oaths and Vows.<sup>2</sup> These were doctrines of vast importance to our Puritan Fathers. But theology and life in the eighteenth century receded from them, and the church of the nineteenth century has little sympathy with them. This is not only the fault of our dogmatic divines, but it is the common fault of our age. This is clear from the new articles of the English Presbyterian Church. There are but three articles to represent these eleven chapters of the Confession, and these three articles are weak as water when compared with the choice wine of our Confession. We would not consent to abandon these grand chapters of Puritanism, for we are convinced that the church of the twentieth century will rise to them and build upon them in the next great revival and reformation of Christianity.

The Puritan doctrine of the Church and the Sacraments, as

but the sin must be punished, either in the person of the sinner or his substitute." (*Presbyterian Doctrine*, pp. 15, 16.) Dr. Charles Hodge says: "But pardon does not produce peace. It leaves the conscience unsatisfied. A pardoned criminal is not only just as much a criminal as he was before, but his sense of guilt and remorse of conscience are in no degree lessened. Pardon can remove only the outward and arbitrary penalty. The sting of sin remains. There can be no satisfaction to the mind until there is satisfaction of justice." (*System of Theology*, iii. 128.) And thus these dogmaticians destroy the Biblical doctrine, which is expressed also in the Apostles' Creed and in all the symbols of the Reformation, by reducing forgiveness of sins to the removal of the penalty. The forgiveness of sins is the Biblical and Confessional doctrine. The conception that forgiveness of sin is simply the removal of the penalty has no warrant in Holy Scripture.

<sup>1</sup> Dr. A. A. Hodge says: "In the justification, therefore, of that majority of the elect which die in infancy, personal faith does not mediate." — *Princeton Review*, 1878, p. 315.

<sup>2</sup> See Briggs's *Whither*, chap. vi.

contained in five chapters of the Confession, is excellent. The Presbyterian churches in our day have receded from them. The doctrines of the real presence and sacramental grace are commonly denied. We regard these as essential and necessary articles. They are bonds of union with the old historic churches of the world. The doctrine of the Church and the Communion of Saints is in accord with the Apostles' Creed. It recognizes the unity, catholicity, and sanctity of the Christian church, doctrines which are much beyond the scope of the average Presbyterian in our day.

The two chapters on Eschatology are better than anything we could get at the present time. The whole church is in perplexity here. The conflict with premillenarianism has resulted in an undue stress on the millennium, and a neglect of the doctrine of the Second Advent of Christ. The conflict with Universalism resulted in an undue stress upon the so-called private judgment at death and everlasting punishment, to the neglect of the middle state and the ultimate judgment. The relative amount of space given to Eschatology by Dr. Hodge is twice that of the Confession, by the new English articles three times, and by Dr. Shedd four times. There has been a singular neglect of the descent of our Lord into hell for the purpose of redemption. But there has been an amazing dogmatic elaboration of the descent of mankind into hell for eternal punishment, far beyond any warrant in Holy Scripture.<sup>1</sup> This elaboration is a fall from the height of the Westminster theology. The Confession keeps our minds fixed on the second advent of Jesus Christ, the resurrection, the judgment of the Messiah, and the bliss of heaven and

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Shedd, in his *Dogmatic Theology*, represents that the clause of the Apostles' Creed, "He descended into hell," is a "spurious clause," and makes a polemic against the doctrine (ii. 603, 607). He goes against the consensus of modern Biblical scholarship in saying that Sheol in the Old Testament "denotes the grave," whenever the righteous are connected with it (ii. 633). His doctrine of the Intermediate State is virtually confined to this polemic. He then devotes six pages to the Second Advent, twelve to the Resurrection, four to the Final Judgment, four to Heaven, and *eighty-six pages to Hell*. This disproportionate treatment has recently been defended on the ground that the doctrine of Hell is most in debate at present. This is not true, for the doctrine of the Second Advent is more in debate. But if it were true, a system of dogmatic theology should give all doctrines their due proportion and adequate place and importance in the system. If it neglects to do this, and gives disproportionate treatment to certain doctrines in which the author is interested, as an advocate, it ceases to be a system of theology, and becomes a treatise of polemical theology.

communion with God. Here are vast reaches for Christian theology, into which it will be for edification to enter. But at present our theologians think more of hell than of heaven, more of the private judgment at death than the ultimate judgment; more of death than the advent of Christ; more of a magical transformation in the dying hour than the discipline of our Saviour in the middle state.

It is clear that there are twenty chapters of the Confession that are in advance of the present faith of the church. True progress will be in rising up to them. So-called conservatives have quietly laid these twenty chapters on the shelf, or have changed their doctrines, and now are groaning at the heterodoxy of those who desire a few changes in three or four chapters. This is the real situation. No truly progressive man will ever consent to abandon these twenty chapters of the Confession, and descend from them to the miserable malarial swamp of the current dogmatic theology on these subjects. These chapters are the pledges of liberty to the Biblical scholar, the charter of progress to the sons of the Reformation; the banner of hope to the children of the Puritans. It is our determination to take them down from the shelf.

#### V. THE ADVANCE IN DOCTRINE.

There are several doctrines in which the modern church has advanced beyond the Confession.

The chapter on God and the Holy Trinity is sadly defective. It is a decline from the doctrine of the ancient church; it is a retreat from the Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England. The reason of this fall was that these doctrines were not in dispute at the time. Such faults always arise in polemic creeds. Such creeds are constructed for the time. They fail in those proportions of faith that are appropriate for all time. Accordingly the doctrine of the Trinity was tacked on as a third section of the chapter on the doctrine of God. It had been received as an inheritance. It was adhered to as an orthodox dogma. But there was no special interest in it. It was not a living question. The doctrine of the Trinity needed unfolding to adapt it to the new faith of the Reformation in the doctrine of Redemption. But the Westminster divines did not attempt it. The Confession was no sooner published than the doctrine of the Trinity became a living issue. John Biddle began his series of assaults on the doctrine of the Trinity. The famous book of Acontius on the Stratagems of Satan was translated into English and attacked by

that erratic Westminster divine, Cheynell.<sup>1</sup> This was but a prelude to the Arian controversy in the eighteenth century. It was introduced by a discussion between Wallis,<sup>2</sup> a clerk of the Westminster Assembly, and Sherlock,<sup>3</sup> an Anglican divine. The one lays undue stress on the unity, the other on the tripersonality of the Godhead. Semi-Arianism began in 1702 with Thomas Emlyn, a Presbyterian pastor of Dublin, who said that he had been unsettled by reading Sherlock. Then Samuel Clark and Whiston came into the field, and these influenced James Pierce, of Exeter, in 1717.<sup>4</sup> And thus the Presbyterian Church in England was involved in the Arian controversy. The same conflict in Scotland centred about the trial of Professor Simpson, of Glasgow. The result of this struggle was that the Irish Presbyterian Church was divided; the Presbyterian Church in England became entirely Unitarian, the Church of Scotland became saturated with semi-Arianism, and New England Congregationalism gave birth to American Unitarianism. The battle with Arianism and Unitarianism taught Presbyterians many sad lessons. The Westminster divines left their children a troublesome legacy in these controversies, due largely to their neglect of the doctrine of the Trinity.

The Westminster statement of the Being and Attributes of God is also defective. The Church has passed through a long contest with deism, atheism, pantheism, and agnosticism, in which the doctrine of the Being and Attributes of God has been greatly advanced. The Personality of God, the Immanence of God, the doctrine of the Living God, a God of holiness and love, — these doctrines are a power in recent theology. The Presbyterians of this century are demanding that there shall be some better confessional statement than the Westminster Confession gives us of our adoration of the living God and Saviour; our experience of the matchless treasures of his grace and love for all mankind; and our worship of the Holy Trinity.

The doctrine of Creation in the Confession was constructed before the development of modern science began. Wallis, one of

<sup>1</sup> John Biddle's *XII Arguments drawn out of the Scripture: whereon the commonly-received opinion touching the Deity of the Holy Spirit is clearly and fully refuted*, 1647; *Confession of Truth touching the Holy Trinity*, 1648; *A Twofold Catechism*, 1654; Acontius's *De Strategematibus*, 1565; *Satan's Stratagems*, 1648; Francis Cheynell's *The Divine Triunity*, 1650.

<sup>2</sup> John Wallis's *The Doctrine of the blessed Trinity, briefly explained*, 1690.

<sup>3</sup> William Sherlock's *The Doctrine of the Trinity*, 1690.

<sup>4</sup> Briggs's *American Presbyterianism*, pp. 194 seq.

the scribes of the Assembly, united with Robert Boyle in founding the Philosophical College in London in 1645. The Royal Society was organized in 1663. Then began that series of discoveries that has made modern science such a wonder of our age, and changed the complexion of the globe. Science was a babe in swaddling clothes in 1646. It is a giant, conquering and to conquer, in 1889. The Westminster doctrine of Creation is mere child's play. It is not in accord with the Scriptures. Science and the Scripture are in much better accord. Let any one read Henry B. Smith's chapter on Christian Cosmology,<sup>1</sup> and he will see that the Westminster divines were only on the threshold of the subject. The scientific spirit of our age demands a better recognition of the order and development of nature and of the relation of the Creator to his Kosmos than we can find in any creed of the sixteenth or seventeenth century.

The anthropology of the Confession preceded the rich development of modern philosophy. Bacon was behind the Westminster divines, but one can trace little, if any, of his influence upon them. They were too much under the influence of Aristotle and the scholastic methods. There were Platonists among them, but these were feeling their way cautiously. Hobbes and Descartes were just coming on the stage. The psychology, ethics, and metaphysics of the Westminster divines were sufficiently crude. Soon after the Assembly adjourned, the Cambridge Platonists came into power. Then came the long development that has resulted in our present schools of philosophy. The whole doctrine of God and man has changed in these evolutions of modern philosophy. No one can understand the Westminster standards who does not take this into account. The doctrines of Original Sin and the Freedom of the Will have been the battle-grounds of modern British and American theology, while ethical questions had the field in Germany. The discussions are deeper, broader, richer, and more far-reaching than the Westminster divines could imagine. The student who knows Julius Müller's doctrine [of Sin, and Dr. Shedd's massive contributions to anthropology,<sup>2</sup> sees that the Westminster divines were sophomores when compared with the theologians of our day.

The Christology of the Confession is also defective. The greatest advance in modern theology has been in its doctrine of the Per-

<sup>1</sup> Henry B. Smith's *System of Christian Theology*, pp. 92 seq.

<sup>2</sup> Julius Müller's *Die Christliche Lehre von der Sünde*, 1858, translated in Clark's Theological Library; Shedd's *Dogmatic Theology*, ii. 1-168.



son and Work of Christ. The doctrine of the Person of Christ has been the great contribution of modern German theology. Its results summed up in the splendid work of Dorner<sup>1</sup> are worth all the writings of the Westminster divines combined. British and American theology has unfolded the doctrine of the Atonement, so that that doctrine has about the same relative position of prominence in American Presbyterian theology as the doctrine of the Decree had to the Westminster divines. But the recent advance in Christology has been only partially appropriated by our American divines. In some features, the Westminster divines are in advance of our dogmaticians. In the stress laid upon the humiliation of Christ, they have neglected the exaltation; in the stress laid upon the crucifixion, they have neglected the incarnation, the holy life, the resurrection, the ascension, the reign, and the second advent. In the stress laid upon compensation and substitution in the doctrine of the Atonement, and the shedding of the blood on the cross, they have neglected the significance of the Redeemer's blood as applied to the heavenly throne and the believer's heart, and the redemptive influence that issues from his person and his heart of love. The church of our day is rising to the adoration of the risen and reigning Christ, and is beginning to look again for his second advent. We are opening our minds to see that the Redeemer's work upon the cross was the beginning of a larger work in the realm of the dead, and from his heavenly throne whence the exalted Saviour is drawing all men unto himself.

In these great doctrines of our religion, the Being and Attributes of God, the Holy Trinity, Creation, the Nature of Man, the Origin and Development of Sin, the Person and Work of Jesus Christ, the church of our century has advanced far beyond the Westminster Confession. The definitions of these chapters are weak and insufficient. Better statements of the public faith of the church are needed. In some way or other it is necessary that we should testify to the wonderful love of a living God and Saviour to the world; our adoration of the Holy Trinity; our enlarged conceptions of nature and its place in the realm of God; our experience of the riches of divine grace and its ample provision for all mankind; and above all we need a confession in which Jesus Christ, our Saviour, shall reign supreme from centre to circumference, and where every section, sentence, and word shall

<sup>1</sup> I. A. Dorner's *Entwicklungsgeschichte der Lehre von der Person Christi*, 1851, translated in Clark's Library.

pulsate with the heart-beats of our Redeemer, not willing that any should perish, but all should come to repentance and salvation.

Such a revision can be made only in the form of a new creed, that will be born of the life, experience, and worship of our age.

#### VI. THE CHIEF DIFFICULTIES.

We shall now consider the chapters where we find the greatest difficulties at present.

The third chapter of the Confession, on the Divine Decree, is a splendid chapter. It gives us the result of the long contest of Puritanism with Arminianism. The English Puritan, Perkins, by his extreme statements is largely responsible for the Arminian controversy that broke out in Holland, and spread over the Reformed world. The English Puritans in general stood by Perkins. The battle was complicated by the adoption of Arminianism by the Anglo-Catholic party. The divine decree was the one great doctrinal issue between Archbishop Laud and the Puritans. That is the reason for the strong, burning, piercing sentences of the third chapter. At the same time, Bishop Davenant led an intermediate party, which was represented in the Westminster Assembly by some of the most influential divines. The doctrine of the Decree was framed in view of all these interests. A real consistent Calvinist does not stumble at them. But there are not as many consistent Calvinists as there used to be. Even the most conservative divines have appropriated features of Arminianism. And it is plain that the doctrine of the Decree is excessive in the Westminster Confession. It not only dominates the third chapter, but it controls the doctrine of Providence in the fifth chapter, and reappears wherever it has a chance throughout the Confession. It forces itself upon us, as one determined to have the last word in a controversy. This was a hobby of the Westminster divines, and they rode a high horse with it. The two chapters on the Decree and Providence have nearly twice the space to that given to the Being and Attributes of God, the Trinity, and Creation. No modern theologian gives such excessive treatment to the divine decree. Dr. Charles Hodge gives one fourth of the space to the Decree and Providence that he gives to the other parts of the doctrine of God. Dr. Shedd gives but one fifth the space. If the Decree were in the same proportions of the doctrine of God in the Westminster Confession that it is in these divines, seven sections would be stricken out, and it would be reduced to the first section.

And then it would have equal space to that given to the Holy Trinity. Is the Divine Decree a more important doctrine than the Trinity? The Westminster divines seemed to think so. But modern Presbyterians have advanced to a better conception in that they exalted the Trinity and depressed the Decree.

The chapter on Effectual Calling is the one that gives the greatest difficulty at the present time, because it teaches the damnation of non-elect infants and of the entire heathen world.

Dogmaticians have endeavored to avoid the plain meaning of the passage by teaching that "elect infants" means all infants, or that infants are elect as a class, going over to the Arminian doctrine of election for babes, while they cling to Calvinism for adults.

The Westminster divines did not know what they were about when they framed these definitions. They made logical deductions from other doctrines without Scripture warrant. Logical deductions are of value in theological speculation if indulged in to a moderate extent. They are much easier than the inductive study of the Scriptures and Christian history. There are few dogmaticians who are not tempted to push these deductions until they lodge in absurdities. They forget that they are not dealing with axiomatic truth, but with premises that are only partially and relatively true, and that are ever changing with the progress of human knowledge. The Westminster divines did not escape these faults in their construction of our standards.

We should bear in mind that in the seventeenth century the entire population was in communion with the national churches, and that all children were baptized. The Westminster divines, many of them at least, believe with their assessor, Dr. Burgess, in the baptismal regeneration of elect infants.<sup>1</sup> They did not believe that baptism worked *ex opere operato*, and therefore they held that some of the baptized were not regenerated, and that some were regenerated without baptism. In this respect, they made an advance beyond the common doctrine at that time, that only the baptized infants could be saved. Unbaptized and non-elect infants, to them, simply meant the children of the heathen and a few revolutionary Anabaptists. They did not think that it was any worse to damn heathen babes than to damn their fathers and mothers, and sisters and brothers. In this respect, we confess that many of us agree with them. The modern revolution of opinion that has brought in the new doctrine of the universal

<sup>1</sup> Burgess's *Baptismal Regeneration of Elect Infants*, Oxford, 1629.

salvation of infants is due to the historic change in the dissenting churches. Large numbers of Baptists and Friends in the eighteenth century refused to baptize their children. The Presbyterian and Congregational churches declined to baptize the children of those who were not communicants, and these they limited to those who would subscribe to their covenants and submit to their examinations and discipline. Accordingly, these strict rules for church membership made an entire change in the Protestant world. In the eighteenth century, a large proportion of the people were excluded from communion with the churches, and millions of babes in Christian lands were unbaptized. Were these children to be damned because their parents declined the obligations of church membership in these sectarian churches, and because these churches refused them baptism? So soon as the church squarely faced the problem, it answered it. Infant baptism sank in importance, and infant salvation rose superior to all rites and ceremonies. The church changed its doctrine, and the Westminster statements became repulsive.

But what can we do about it? We have a new doctrine; but we cannot prove it from Scripture; we have not brought it into harmony with other Christian doctrines. We cannot put the new doctrine into the Confession without changing other doctrines of greater importance. The problem is, how are these infants saved? Dr. Hodge saves them without faith, and so undermines the doctrine of Justification by Faith. Dr. Strong thinks that they are regenerated so soon as they see Christ, and believe on Him after death, and thus extends regeneration into the middle state.<sup>1</sup> Many divines, German, English, and American, think they have a probation in the middle state. There are some serious questions to be settled before this new doctrine can go into a public confession of faith.

It is very much the same with the doctrine of the damnation of the heathen. The Westminster divines knew but little of heathenism. The heathen were to them the Turks, the enemies of Christ and his church, and a few negroes on the coast of Africa, and Indians in America whom they were inclined to identify with the lost tribes of Israel. They knew nothing of the countless mil-

<sup>1</sup> "Since there is no evidence that children dying in infancy are regenerated prior to death, either with or without the use of external means, it seems most probable that the work of regeneration may be performed by the Spirit in connection with the infant soul's first view of Christ in the other world." — A. H. Strong's *Systematic Theology*, p. 357. Rochester, 1886.

lions of Asia, Africa, America, and the islands of the sea, as these have been revealed to us by modern travelers and modern commerce. They were not straitened by this doctrine as we are. What man or woman can for a moment contemplate the eternal damnation of these countless millions of heathen, now living, far exceeding the number of Christians, men and women who have never heard the gospel, without crying from the bottom of his soul, God forbid! Our God and Saviour could not do such a thing. Modern divines are seeking earnestly for some way in which to save the heathen. Some would save them by faith in the implicit Christ, that is, in God so far as He reveals himself unto them. This is a new doctrine. Where is the Scripture for any salvation apart from faith in Jesus Christ? A recent speculator gave them a chance for a saving vision of Christ between breath and death. German divines look for relief to a probation in the middle state. There are important problems to be solved before this doctrine of the salvation of the heathen can be put into a public confession of faith.

If we cannot tolerate in the Confession these doctrines of the damnation of the heathen and non-elect infants, now that none of us believe in them, there is no other way than to blot out these sections altogether. We cannot introduce new doctrines where we lack warrant from Scripture, and we are unable to harmonize them with other confessional doctrines.

But even if these awkward doctrines were removed, this chapter would not be satisfactory. The doctrine of Effectual Calling has passed out of the field of modern theology, and Regeneration has taken its place. Regeneration was a term used by the older theologians in connection with infants and baptism. The great movement called Methodism, that arose in the eighteenth century, brought the doctrine of Regeneration into prominence, and the whole attitude of the church to this question has changed. The great question of salvation is no longer justification and effectual calling, but regeneration and the experience of faith.

The Westminster Confession is defective in that it has no chapter on the work of the Holy Spirit. The work of the Holy Spirit is taught in several chapters of the Confession under the heads of other doctrines, but this has been overlooked by the dogmatists and the ministry who follow them. It is one of the features of modern progressive theology that it lays great stress on the work of the Holy Spirit. The new articles of the Presbyterian Church of England have made an improvement by treating the material

of the tenth chapter in three chapters, one on the Gospel, another on the Holy Spirit, and a third on Regeneration. This is more in accord with the faith of progressive theologians in our day, and shows how far modern Presbyterianism is in advance of the Westminster divines.

The chapter on Marriage and Divorce is not in accord with present views in the church. It has recently been amended by striking out the prohibition of marriage with a deceased wife's sister. But the whole reference to Levitical laws of marriage is wrong. The Levitical law is no longer binding on Christians. The statement that "such as profess the true reformed religion should not marry with infidels, papists, or other idolaters" is not justified by the Word of God, is a slander upon Roman Catholic Christians, and is unworthy of a place in a Christian creed. No one thinks of such limitations of marriage in our times. The marriage law has no rightful place in a confession. Its place there was due to the conflict with John Milton in 1645.

#### VII. HOW SHALL WE REVISE ?

There are several chapters that give real difficulty to the Presbyterian Church, and there is a strong and widespread cry for relief from them. It is not easy to remove the difficulties from these chapters. We have to consider amendment by omission, insertion, and reconstruction. Therefore many have come to the conclusion that the wisest method is to make the revision in the form of a new and simple creed. Who can get up any enthusiasm over patching up an old creed? When the knife is in hand, one thrusts it in here, another there, until the Confession is as full of knives as St. Sebastian with arrows. But a new creed, a simple devotional statement of our faith,—we all need it for the education of our children, for the training of young converts, for the concert of public worship. A creed that will express the faith, life, and devotion of the present time, born of our experience and needs, is a grand ideal, worthy of the effort and enthusiasm of a great church; a plan of campaign about which it is practicable to rally the Presbyterian and Reformed world.

This new creed should not displace the Westminster Confession, but be a supplementary and congregational symbol. As we already have a Confession of Faith and two catechisms, there is no sufficient reason why we should not have a popular congregational creed that will drive into everlasting perdition the thousand and more crude, ill-digested things that are now in use in our congregations.



If we keep the new creed strictly in line with the Confession, insisting that all the essential and necessary articles of the Confession shall have a place therein, we shall avoid those serious omissions that spoil the new articles of the English Presbyterian Church, and at the same time we may insert those new doctrines that constitute such an excellent feature of these new articles. We shall then have several grades of doctrine for all classes of our people, — a maximum and minimum of doctrine. We may then advance into the conflicts of the twentieth century with a new banner expressing the living issues of our times streaming in the midst of the old battle-flags that have come down to us from the seventeenth century.

The revision movement in the American Presbyterian Church began with a call for changes in a few sections. It has already reached a second stage, in which the question of a new creed has become prominent. It is forced by the circumstances of the case to advance to a third stage. The terms of subscription are the real difficulty in the situation. If we are to have a new creed, are we to subscribe to the old or to the new, or to both? This question must be faced before many conservative men will be ready to advocate the new creed. We venture to say that the terms of subscription are the key to the history of the American Presbyterian Church, and in some respects of the history of British Christianity since the Reformation. Party lines are ever drawn here, whatever may be the ostensible lines of division. The battle in the Presbyterian Church since 1729 has been a battle between loose subscription and strict subscription. We cannot solve this great problem of the revision of our standards and ignore this fundamental question. At the root of all our difficulties at the present time lies our indefinite and variously interpreted term of subscription. We are between the advocates of loose subscription and the promoters of rigid subscription. There is a middle way that is safe and honest, — the way of definite subscription.

The present term of subscription is a torture to tender consciences. It is a bar of iron to rigid Calvinists to exclude those who do not agree with them from the church. It is a rope of sand to loose thinkers who are determined to think and do as they please in the church. The term of subscription means one thing in western Pennsylvania, another thing in central New York. It is one thing in Baltimore, another thing in our metropolis. Presbyterianism changes its complexion as we pass from State to State and from city to city. The real test of orthodoxy in the Pres-



byteries is not the Westminster Confession in its historic sense, — is not the term of subscription in its historical meaning. It is the system of doctrine held by the majority of the ministers, and the term of subscription as interpreted by them. It is in general the systems of doctrine of American dogmaticians, with such measure of departure therefrom as the majority of a Presbytery may deem it wise to allow.

The Westminster Confession was framed by divines who had no thought of requiring subscription to it. Antony Tuckney, one of the most influential Westminster divines, tells us: "In the Assemblée I gave my vote with others that the Confession of Faith put out by Authority should not be either required to be sworn or subscribed to; we having been burnt in the hand in that kind before, but so as not to be publicly preached or written against."<sup>1</sup>

The Westminster Directory of ordination does not require subscription to the Confession. The dissenting brethren representing Congregationalism delayed the organization of the Presbyterian Church of England so long that it became impossible to construct it. If those who dissented from the doctrinal articles had prolonged the debates, the Confession would never have been composed. The Assembly would have been forced to a shorter and simpler creed, or they would have gone to their homes without agreement. Subscription was never used in the Presbyterian Church in England. Subscription was not used in the Presbyterian Church of Ireland at the time when Francis Makemie came to assist New England divines in laying the foundations of the American Presbyterian Church. Subscription was imposed on the Presbyterian Church of Scotland in 1693, by Parliament, in the interest of breadth and toleration. The revolution of 1688 transformed the Episcopal Church of Scotland into a Presbyterian Church of Scotland. The term of subscription was designed to protect those of the Episcopal minority who were willing to conform, and to protect them from the intolerance of the Presbyterian majority. Terms of subscription devised in the interest of comprehension and liberty were afterwards used as means of bondage, torture, and exclusion. The American Presbyterian Church in 1729 adopted the Westminster standards in a catholic spirit.<sup>2</sup> They adopted not the whole doctrine, but the system of doctrine;

<sup>1</sup> *Eight Letters of Dr. Antony Tuckney and Dr. Benjamin Whichcote*, p. 76. London, 1753.

<sup>2</sup> *Briggs's American Presbyterianism*, pp. 216 seq.

not all the articles, but the essential and necessary articles. At the time of the adoption of the Confession, they allowed exceptions to the doctrine of two different chapters,<sup>1</sup> showing in concrete cases that they used articles in a broad sense, and that we are justified in rejecting not only clauses, but sections of chapters, so far as these are not essential to the Westminster system. This historical interpretation of the terms of subscription is the law of the American Presbyterian Church, and gives the rule for the action of its Presbyteries.

The term adopted in 1788 is as follows: "Do you sincerely receive and adopt the Confession of Faith of this church as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures?" This is not so clear as it ought to be. It might be made more definite by inserting into it its historic interpretation. By using the phrases of the Adopting Act, the implicit meaning may be made explicit in some such way as this: "Do you sincerely receive and adopt the system of doctrine contained in the Westminster Confession, as being in its essential and necessary articles the doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures?" If the term could be thus amended, young men and elders would know what they were subscribing to. They would know that it was not the system of Turretin, or Charles Hodge, or H. B. Smith, or W. G. T. Shedd, but the Westminster System, and that the essential and necessary articles of that system are the only ones to which they are bound. The terms of subscription and Presbyterial examinations have been too often used as bars of authority to exclude from the church, when they ought to be pledges of liberty to invite men into the church and make them feel at home therein, within the limits of the essential and necessary articles of the Westminster system.

The first step in revision, therefore, should be to revise the terms of subscription, and make them definite, so that the subscriber would know that he was subscribing to the essential and necessary articles of the Westminster system. The second step should then be to define what these essential and necessary articles are. This may be done in the new creed. The new creed should (1) set forth the essential and necessary articles of the Confession, and omit all unessential and unnecessary articles; (2) give adequate expression to those doctrines that have risen into prominence since the Westminster Confession was composed. The new creed would thus be of the nature of a declaratory act in

<sup>1</sup> Chaps. xx. and xxiii.

the form of a devotional and a congregational creed. It would give relief not only at two or three points, as does the Declaratory Act of the United Presbyterian Church of Scotland, but it would give relief at all points, for it would be as full and explicit as the Presbyterian Church of our day deems it wise to express its faith.

In our opinion it would be best not to touch the Westminster Confession, but to give our strength to the construction of a new creed. It is evident, however, that there are statements in the Confession that are so offensive to many of our best ministers, elders, and people, that there is serious danger of losing them from the church. It is the duty of a Christian church to take stumbling-blocks out of the way. Our Saviour calls those children of Gehenna who strove to put barriers in the way of entering his kingdom.<sup>1</sup> There are other synagogues of Satan than the Church of Rome, there are other Antichrists than the Pope, there are other idolaters than Romanists. There are those who make an idol of the Westminster Confession. There are those in the Presbyterian Church who have the antichristian spirit of intolerance and persecution. Even a Presbyterian church may become a synagogue of Satan by excluding those who belong to Jesus Christ. The Presbyterian Church was not organized for the sake of conserving the Confession. The Confession was made by the church and for the church. It has been revised in the past. It will be revised again and again, if necessary, to relieve tender consciences. God forbid that it should ever be a yoke of bondage and a staff for oppression; therefore remove the offensive statements. This may be done for the most part by excision. Some of us shrink from the work of insertion and reconstruction. But in Christ's name let us go forward and give our young men and elders the relief they demand. We believe that the revision movement is born of God. It will be guided by the Holy Spirit. It is a great step toward a better future. It is a preparation for a new reformation of the church. It is in the direction of Christian harmony, catholicity, and unity. Jesus Christ is at the head of this movement; we shall do well if with open minds and hearts we look for his word and follow faithfully his call.

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<sup>1</sup> Matt. xxiii. 13-15.