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MAN ABOVE NATURE.

By the term Nature we mean the established order of things instituted by the Creator, and carried forward by his immanent energy. This energy is revealed in different orders of phenomena that take the form of persistent and uniform laws. Those who recognize only matter and force as factors in the world's evolution, setting aside the creative energy, still have a common ground with us, in the uniformities of Nature, for determining whether given phenomena do, or do not, come under natural law. Doubtless the domain of the natural may include many phenomena which we suppose to be supernatural, because they come under a law unknown to us. But we here bring into discussion only phenomena close at hand, to which the plainest tests may be readily applied.

The "Reign of Law" is doubtless universal; but this may not be true of natural law, since there may be a kingdom in which neither the divine energy nor impersonal forces are the sole factors. It is conceded not only that the lower kingdoms belong to the domain of Nature, but that man, with his spiritual nature, is grounded in and conditioned by it. In fact, the elements and forces of the lower kingdoms are so taken up into his organism, carrying their own *régime* with them, that the economy of Nature seems to repeat itself therein as a miniature representation of it. It is not strange, therefore, that many scientists, in seeking the broadest generalizations, should have assumed the universality of Nature, and excluded the supernatural not only from man but from the universe. The present discussion relates only to man. We hope to show that while the natural economy is repeated in

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simpler relations of numbers by the visibly arranged balls of a reckoner, but who at length rises above it, grasping in thought relations it could not express, so man learns at length to rise above the mechanism of Nature and the forms of language, to commune directly with the Father of his spirit. He has an insight that out-reaches both. Knowing that God knows his thought and his heart, he enters often with thought and feeling unexpressed into immediate fellowship, spirit with spirit, dealing not with natural forces and laws, but with Him who holds them in his hand, and whose especial dwelling-place is the humble and the contrite heart.

Call this mystical, if you will. It is real. It is where prophets and holy men received inspiration and illumination. It is where the good and the great experience the inflowing of divine strength and are lifted above themselves. Especially when truth and grace are seen in Christ as the Redeemer, ethical law loses its character as a mere imperative, and becomes a principle of love and of life. Such is the best life of man. It is not natural, it is *normal*. It is not superhuman. It is not miraculous. It is supernatural.

Rev. Lucius Curtis.

HARTFORD, CONN.

THE PROPOSED REVISION OF THE WESTMINSTER CONFESSION.

THE revision movement was a spontaneous outburst of a long-suppressed desire for certain modifications in the Westminster Confession of Faith. The desire for revision was very strong with regard to chapter iii., Of God's Eternal Decree; chapter x., Of Effectual Calling; and also, with some strength, with regard to chapter xxiv., Of Marriage and Divorce; and chapter xxv., Of the Church.

Moreover, ninety-three presbyteries asked the insertion in the Confession of a more explicit statement of the love of God for the world, and sixty presbyteries for a statement of the sufficiency of the atonement and free offer of salvation to all men. As regards other parts of the Confession, no other chapters received more than twelve votes of presbyteries desiring revision. The votes of the presbyteries defined with sufficient plainness what was the work given to the committee to do. The success of their

work depends upon the simple question whether they have revised the Confession in these lines so clearly marked out by the presbyteries.

A. The committee on revision have given great attention to the revision of chapters of the Confession where the Presbyterian Church by a vote of the presbyteries had indicated no desire for revision. They propose alterations in no less than nineteen chapters of the thirty-three which constitute our Confession; namely, i., iii., iv., vi., vii., viii., ix., x., xi., xiv., xv., xvi., xxi., xxii., xxiii., xxiv., xxv., xxix., xxx. These are among the most important articles of our faith. The church asked for a revision of four chapters only, but this committee offer a revision of fifteen additional chapters, with which the church apparently was satisfied when they answered the overture of the Assembly to what extent they desired revision.

I. Many of these revisions are trivial. They appear to express the eccentricities of some leading members of the committee. Why should a great church be asked to make such unimportant modifications in its historic faith? Single words of seemingly little importance at the time may be the entering wedges for important modifications of doctrine at a later period.

(1.) In chapter vii. 3, "by his Word and Spirit" is inserted before "he freely offereth unto sinners life and salvation by Jesus Christ," for what reason we are not informed. Not a single presbytery asked for it.

(2.) Chapter vii. 4 is stricken out. No presbytery proposed this. The presbyteries of Dayton and Whitewater asked that one word, "frequently," be stricken out; that is all.

(3.) In chapter vii. 5, 6, the words, "and is called the Old Testament," "and is called the New Testament," are stricken out, without the request of any presbytery.

(4, 5.) In chapter vii. 5 and xi. 3, "divine justice" is substituted for "the justice of his Father." Only three presbyteries asked this. The Confessional phrase seems to the writer preferable.

(6.) In chapter xi. 1, they omit the words, "they have not of themselves," in the clause, "which faith they have not of themselves, it is the gift of God." This omission does not change the doctrine, for that is retained in the phrase "faith is the gift of God," — it only changes the expression of the doctrine, and that was not asked by any presbytery of the church. Here we have six trivial changes in chapters where the committee were not

asked to display their ingenuity. The presbyteries should reject them all. Any scholar might easily suggest twice as many improvements which he would prefer to these.

II. There are several changes of considerable importance which the committee propose, but which the church did not desire.

(1.) Nine presbyteries asked a revision of chapter vi. 4. This was doubtless due to the rather severe and harsh expressions of the doctrine of the effect of original corruption in the life of men. It is doubtful whether the committee were justified in undertaking such a revision with only nine presbyteries at their back. But if they did undertake it, they ought to have removed the difficulty. They have not accomplished this by the insertion of "spiritually" before "good," and the omission of "all" before "evil." The new clause respecting "social and civil virtues" is fairly well expressed, so far as it goes, but the doctrine of virtue has no proper place in the doctrine of original sin.

(2.) Only two presbyteries asked for a change in chapter ix. The Presbytery of Peking simply called attention to it in general as needing revision. The Presbytery of Morris and Orange object to the declaration that "man by his fall into a state of sin, hath wholly lost all ability of will to any spiritual good accompanying salvation." The revision of this chapter destroys the ancient doctrine of the bondage of the will, not only by substituting "lost all disposition to" for "lost all ability of will to," but still more by inserting in the first section the new clause, "Wherefore man is, and remains, a free moral agent, retaining full responsibility for all his acts in his states, alike of innocency, of sin, of grace, and of glory." It is hard to reconcile this "full responsibility" with the statements of chapter vi., and the last section of chapter ix., which reads: "The will of man is made perfectly and immutably free to good alone, in the state of glory only," and the intermediate section 4, "When God converts a sinner, . . . he freeth him from his natural bondage under sin, and by his grace alone enables him freely to will and to do that which is spiritually good." Besides, the phrase "state of innocency," although proper in itself, is regarded by Dr. Shedd as Pelagian.

(3.) In chapter xiv. 1, a single presbytery, Southern Dakota, was fortunate enough to have its wish gratified in the substitution of "sinners" for the "elect." This presbytery ought to feel greatly flattered.

(4.) Chapter xvi. 7 needed revision, according to twelve pres-

byteries. The section has been reconstructed by the revisers, but with ill success. The omission of the clause "for the matter of them," before "they may be things which God commands," impairs the antithesis with "because they proceed not from a heart purified by faith," etc., which presents the reasons why they are not really the things God commands them; and the insertion of the clause "do not meet the requirements of the divine law" introduces an inconsistency with the statement that "they may be things which God commands." How can anything be what God commands and at the same time not meet the requirements of the divine law? The statement of the Confession is at least clear and consistent. The statement of the revision is inconsistent and obscure.

(5.) The Presbytery of Newark was the only presbytery which asked a revision of chapter xxi. 4 by the omission of all after the words "for the dead," thus cutting out "nor for those of whom it may be known that they have sinned the sin unto death." It would have been wiser to have left out all reference to what men are not to pray for. The Scripture tells us of the sin unto death for which we are not to pray inasmuch as it can never be forgiven in this world or the world to come (1 John v. 16; Mark iii. 29); but how any man can know it we are not informed. There is a certain propriety in saying that we should not pray for those who commit such a sin. But Holy Scripture nowhere forbids praying for the dead. This practice is against the traditions of Protestantism in general, but it is in all the ancient liturgies. It is the practice of the Roman Catholics and not a few Anglicans. It seems unnecessary, without warrant from Holy Scripture, to antagonize this ancient Christian practice in the article on prayer. If any revision were necessary, it should have removed both negative references here.

(6.) In chapter xxiii. 3 the Confession uses the phrase "nursing fathers," in connection with the civil magistrates, whose duty it is said to be "to protect the church of our common Lord." This is a Scriptural expression (Isa. xlix. 23), and not inappropriate. But the committee apparently see in it a squint in the direction of Church and State which escaped the eyes of the men of the revolution in 1789; and therefore, without a voice from any presbytery to prompt them, in their high mightiness as American patriots, they cross it out.

(7.) Three presbyteries asked a change in chapter xxix. 2; two of them (Boulder and Petoskey) request an omission of any

reference to the Roman Catholic Church. Their request has not been granted. The Presbytery of Union asks that the clause about the popish mass be omitted. This also the committee declined. They then go to work and do what no presbytery asked them to do, and substitute for the Confessional sentence, "so that the popish sacrifice of the mass, as they call it, is most abominably injurious to Christ's one only sacrifice, the alone propitiation for all the sins of the elect," the following choice bit of their own composition, "so that the Roman Catholic doctrine of the sacrifice of the mass is most injurious to Christ's one only sacrifice for sin." This is a condensation, omitting some unnecessary expressions, but it is no real improvement to substitute "Roman Catholic" for "popish." If anything was to be done with this passage, the committee should have taken the advice of the three presbyteries who asked for a change, and should have left the sentence out altogether.

(8.) Nine presbyteries asked for a revision of chapter xxx. 2; two of these that it should be omitted; three that it should be reconstructed; three that "ministerial and declarative" should be inserted; and one that the ability to forgive sins should not be constructively ascribed to church officers. The committee have followed the advice of three presbyteries and inserted "ministerial and declarative" before "power respectively to retain and remit sins." They thus have introduced a low church interpretation into the Confession, and so displeased high churchmen on the one side, who think that this qualification is unjustified, and broad churchmen on the other hand, who ask what is the Scriptural authority for this qualification, and who prefer that the power of the keys should be so stated that each party may hold his opinion. We fail to see any improvement in substituting "and by opening it" for "and to open it." We think that the Westminster statement is to be preferred. No presbytery asked for this change.

We have gone over these eight important changes in the Confession proposed by the committee on revision, but not asked by the presbyteries of our church. Not one of them is worthy of adoption. Some changes might well be made in some of these chapters by omission of clauses to which exception is taken. But every insertion or modification proposed by this committee is a mistake and a blunder.

III. Changes not requested by presbyteries, but proposed by this committee, which change the faith of the church in the direction of error.

(1.) Not a presbytery in our church asks for a change in chapter i., and yet the committee propose an insertion which spoils a splendid paragraph, detracts from its value, and introduces a serious error.

(2.) Five presbyteries requested a change in chapter iv. 1; three of them without specification, two of them the omission of "out of nothing" and "six days." This omission is exactly what ought to have been made, if anything was to be done. This the committee decline to do. But on the contrary, they made a new statement which flies in the face of modern science and modern Biblical scholarship. The following is the statement, with the changes:—

"It pleased God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, for the manifestation of the glory of his eternal power, wisdom, and goodness,

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REVISION.

in the beginning, to create or make out of nothing, the world, and all things therein, whether visible or invisible, in the space of six days, and all very good."

in the beginning, to create of nothing all things, visible and invisible, and all very good: the heaven and the earth, and all that in them is, being made by Him in six days."

The statement of the Westminster Confession is a paraphrase of Genesis i. and of Col. i. 16, and in case of difficulty the Confession might fairly be interpreted in the light of these passages of Holy Scripture. But the revision makes a general statement with reference to all things, and then a specific statement with reference to the heavens and the earth and all that in them is. It attaches the six days of Gen. i. to the latter; but the "very good" of Gen. i. to the former. There is no propriety in this separation. If the "very good" is appropriate to "all things," so also is the "six days," for they both rest on the same passage of Genesis, and are inseparably connected with the same story of creation. "In the beginning," which also belongs to the story in Genesis i., is separated from the specific statement, and attached to the general statement, on what Biblical or scientific authority it would be difficult to state, for there is positively none whatever. Science denies the creation of all things in the beginning out of nothing. One may grant, as a piece of theological speculation, that when God began to create, He created out of nothing. But the history of origin shows creative acts separated by myriads and probably millions of years from the beginning, and it is evidently doubtful, to say the least, whether these later creations

were made out of nothing. Certainly, according to Gen. ii., man was not created out of nothing. Thus there are no less than three distinct errors introduced into this chapter of the committee on revision. They make it difficult for modern scholars to subscribe to it. Many would be forced to leave the church, and others would be prevented from entering it.

(3.) Three presbyteries request a revision of chapter xxii. 3; two desire that the last clause be changed from the negative to a positive form. The Presbytery of Freeport desires that it be omitted altogether. The committee have listened to this siren voice, and blotted out from the Confession the important duty of taking a lawful oath in courts of justice. This inclines in the direction of the Anabaptists and Quakers, against whom this clause was framed by the Westminster divines.

(4.) Three presbyteries, Brooklyn, Logansport, and Louisville, request the omission of the clause relating to popish monastic vows of chapter xxii. 7. Instead of following this wise suggestion, the committee simply omit "popish" before "monastic vows," and "superstitions" before "dangerous snares;" and thus they change the opposition to popish monastic vows into an opposition to monastic vows in general. I can subscribe to the statement against popish monastic vows, although with a sense of the impropriety of a wholesale condemnation of an institution which, even in the Roman Catholic Church, has some features of excellence and blessing; but to affirm that monastic vows, as such, are "dangerous snares in which no Christian should entangle himself," is to affirm an historical error and utter a slanderous accusation against one of the most efficient historical organizations of Christian life and work. The monastic orders of the Middle Ages were most potent influences for good. The modern orders of Protestant deaconesses are of great excellence. And the time may come again when a new monasticism will be required by the great missionary problem of the church.

In these three instances the revisers propose to introduce into the Confession dangerous and hurtful errors, which may compel many ministers and laymen to retire from a church that deliberately adopts them, and will prevent many thoughtful students from entering the ministry of such a church. Three additional barriers would be thereby erected in the pathway of church unity.

IV. There are two instances only in which this committee propose good revisions in passages where the church has not asked for them. These are the substitution of "condemnation" for

“damnation” in chapter xv. 4, requested by four presbyteries, and also chapter xxix. 8, asked by three presbyteries.

These two are the only ones which can be commended out of the twenty which we have considered under this head of revision not requested by the church.

B. The committee on revision propose two new chapters, the one of the work of the Holy Spirit, in five sections; the other of the gospel, in four sections. Here again the committee have expended their strength upon a chapter “Of the Holy Spirit,” when only five presbyteries asked for anything of the kind, and these simply a fuller statement “respecting the person and work of the Holy Spirit.” The request of ninety-three presbyteries for a more explicit statement of the love of God for the world, and of sixty presbyteries for a statement of the “sufficiency of the atonement and free offer of salvation to all men,” is answered in the lesser chapter “Of the Gospel.”

(1.) The chapter “Of the Holy Spirit” not desired by the church compares unfavorably with the strong, clear, and definite statements of the Westminster Confession.

(a.) The chapter was composed without regard to the style, language, and phrases of the Westminster Confession. It is a coarse patch of the commonest kind of material on an ancient robe of royal purple. Indeed, it may be properly said that there was not a single member of the committee on revision who had any familiar acquaintance with the writings of the Westminster divines or the sources of our standards. It will be sufficient to compare their statement as to the third person of the Trinity with the statement of chapter viii. as to the second person of the Trinity.

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“The Son of God, the second person in the Trinity, being very and eternal God, of one substance, and equal with the Father.”

NEW CHAPTER.

“The Holy Spirit, the third person in the Trinity, being very and eternal God, the same in substance with the Father and the Son, and equal in power and glory.”

“The same in substance with” is not altogether in harmony with “of one substance with,” and it certainly is not so terse. The Westminster expression visibly emphasizes the unity; our revision uses an expression which implies identity. “Equal in power and glory” may be more sonorous than “equal with,” but it is not so rich and strong, because it raises the question whether the equality is to be confined to power and glory, whether the

Holy Spirit is not also equal in every other attribute and energy of the Godhead. It is also noteworthy that "sacred Scriptures" is used instead of the better Westminster expression, "Holy Scripture." The statement as to the work of the Holy Spirit, in connection with Holy Scripture, in section two, compares very unfavorably with the statement of chapter i., 5, 6, 10. This section, too, is a foul and unworthy copy of an ancient masterpiece. The statements of sections three and four are diffuse and inadequate. The language lacks simplicity and dignity. It is without pith and force. If it was worth writing, it ought to have given an exact and comprehensive statement of the work of the Holy Spirit as it is set forth especially in chapters x. 1, 2, 3, 4; xii.; xiii.; xiv. 1; xvi. 3; xvii.; xviii. 2, 3, 4; xxi. 3. But it is really meagre. It is sloppy at some points, but in general its expressions are in a narrow bed of conception of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. In section five there is a very remarkable confusion of the work of the Holy Spirit with the work of Christ. It is the royal prerogative of Christ, as the king and head of the church, to call his ministers, and endow them with their qualifications for the special work to which He has called them, according to Eph. iv. 10-16, and the Westminster Confession, xxv. 3. It is also the work of the Messiah to purify his church, and make it a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, according to Eph. v. 25-27. Doubtless the Holy Spirit is the agent through whom Christ works, but the special work of Christ ought not to be attributed to the Holy Spirit. The Confession is generally careful and accurate in its treatment of the several works of the three persons of the Holy Trinity. This revision introduces a strange confusion. If this chapter is the best that this committee can do in the way of making new statements, the Lord deliver us from new statements of any kind, from them or any committee like them.

Five presbyteries asked for a fuller statement respecting "the person and work of the Holy Spirit." This committee have given a more meagre statement. The Confession itself already contains a much fuller statement than that proposed by the committee. The peril is that if this chapter should be adopted it will be taken as giving the doctrine of the Confession as regards the work of the Holy Spirit, and so the richer and fuller statement, scattered through the Confession, will be overlooked and displaced by this newer, more meagre, and very inaccurate and confused statement.

(2.) The chapter "Of the Gospel" is a better piece of work than the chapter "Of the Holy Spirit," but it shows in a less degree, but no less truly, the same weakness, sloppiness, lack of breadth, and general inadequacy.

(a.) As to style, one observes a constant redundancy, in the use of dual expressions, for example, meditation and sacrifice; life and salvation; sufficient for and adapted to; fully and clearly; invites and commands; duty and privilege; impenitence and unbelief. Seldom does one find a single definite term, or trinal expression. This peculiarity of style is strikingly different from the terse and powerful style of the Confession.

(b.) The great demand of the church was that there should be a more explicit statement of the love of God for the world. This chapter ought to have begun with the wonderful doctrine of the Gospel of John, that "God so loved the world as to give his only begotten son," etc., and the chapter throughout ought to have been pervaded with the love of God for the world, so that this love would shine through all its sentences. But in fact the only mention of the love of God in the chapter is in the single phrase of section two, "In the gospel, God declares his love for the world." Certainly this does not satisfy the craving of the church in this particular.

However, we must say that the other desire of the church, that there should be a statement of "the sufficiency of the atonement and free offer of salvation to all men," is fully met. The New School element on the committee had their way in this particular. If the love of God for the world had been as prominent in this chapter as this other doctrine, the church would have been better pleased.

(c.) But the difficulty remains that the new chapter is in many respects inconsistent with other statements of the Confession. The statement in the third section, as to the duty of accepting the gospel and the aggravated guilt of continuing in unbelief, is not stated from the point of view of God's love to the world, but with unnecessary harshness. The guilt of rejecting the gospel ought to be based upon the infinite love of God in offering it to men.

(d.) The fourth section is a poor affair. It strikes one unfavorably to see the great commission of Christ, which is a sufficient warrant for preaching the gospel to the world, introduced by reasons which, however valid in themselves, are not so powerful as the commission itself. Why this reasoning: "Since there is no other way of salvation than that revealed in the gospel, and

since in the divinely established and ordinary methods of grace, faith cometh by hearing the word of God"? It is a weak and insipid prelude to the one sentence which would be more powerful in its simple majesty. "Christ has commissioned his church to go into all the world, and to make disciples of all nations." But the love of Christ ought to have been emphasized in connection with this commission. The section closes with laying stress upon the obligation to sustain the ordinances of religion, when it ought to have concluded with a strong presentation of the great motive for missions, love to Christ and loyalty to the loving master who commissions his disciple with such a message of love to the world. A careful reading of this chapter impresses one with the feeling that the gentlemen who composed it were not thinking much of the love of God to the world, but rather of the ecclesiastical interests of the church and the obligation of all Christians to sustain the missionary enterprises of the church.

If the Presbyterian Church should hastily adopt this chapter, they would blush with shame for it before many months had elapsed. The two new chapters are even greater failures than the proposed revision of the Confession by the insertion of new words and phrases.

V. We have reserved for the last the question of all others in this work of revision, whether the committee have successfully revised the four chapters which gave difficulty to the church and really caused the outbreaking of the cry for revision.

(1.) Chapter xxiv. 3, On Marriage and Divorce, was not satisfactory to nineteen presbyteries. They objected to the prohibition of marriage with "papists or other idolaters," and with such as "maintain damnable heresies." The revisers rightly erase the latter. They ought to have erased the former also. They really have made it still more objectionable by using the general terms "adherents of false religions." This is a matter with which a confession of faith has nothing to do.

(2.) Sixty-two presbyteries desired a revision of chapter xxv. 6. This desire was chiefly due to the statement that the Pope of Rome "is that antichrist, that man of sin, and son of perdition, that exalteth himself in the church, against Christ and all that is called God," which is an unjustifiable pointing of the antichrist of Scripture at the Pope. The revisers do well in striking this all out. But when they go to work and construct a new statement, and substitute it for what remains of the Westminster statement, they again show their inability to make confessional statements. If they had been content with excision, we should have

had the strong and simple statement: "There is no other head of the church but the Lord Jesus Christ, nor can the Pope of Rome in any sense be head thereof." This is satisfactory. But the revisers substitute, "The Lord Jesus Christ is the only head of the church, and the claim of the Pope of Rome or any other human authority to be the vicar of Christ and the head of the church universal is without warrant in Scripture or in fact, and is a usurpation, dishonoring to the Lord Jesus Christ," which is diffuse, wordy, and weak.

(3.) The revision of chapter x. in general was called for by twenty-six presbyteries, and of section three by seventy-nine presbyteries, and of section four by sixty-two presbyteries. The intent of this widespread call for revision was to remove from the Confession the doctrine of infant damnation, and to secure a basis for the salvation of some of the heathen.

The striking out of the words "and these only" in the first section is of small importance. The substitution of "dead in sin" for "altogether passive therein" is also trivial. Neither of these changes is of sufficient importance to bring before the presbyteries.

The chief difficulty lies in the third section. The difficulty is removed in the case of infants by striking out the word "elect" before infants; but it is immediately restored by the statement which is inserted, that they are "included in the election of grace." What the difference is between "elect infants," and infants "included in the election of grace," we fail to see. It is not stated that all infants are included in the election of grace, and therefore there is still room for the implication that some infants are not included in the election of grace. This is all the more suggested by the fact that "all" is used before "other persons not guilty of actual transgression."

The statement of the Confession, "So also are all other elect persons, who are incapable of being outwardly called by the ministry of the word," historically refers to idiots and imbeciles. For this historic phrase the committee substitute "all other persons not guilty of actual transgression." This we regard as a very important limitation of the Westminster statement. It raises the question with reference to those who become idiots and imbeciles in early childhood, whether or not they have been guilty of actual transgression; and who is going to decide this difficult question in any concrete case? And where is the Scriptural authority for teaching that those guilty of actual transgression and who become idiots afterwards may not be regenerated and saved by Christ through the Spirit, apart from word and sacrament?

The insertion of the clause "so also are all other elect persons who are not outwardly called by the word" is a definite recognition of the salvation of elect heathen, and is therefore a decided gain; but we doubt the propriety in substituting "called by the word" for "called by the ministry of the word."

The revision of section four is a gain, in that it leaves off the closing words, "and to assert and maintain that they may be very pernicious, and to be detested." But apart from this there is no real improvement. The insertion of "inasmuch as" and the removal of "therefore" are not worth the doing. The substitution of "neither is there salvation in any other way than by Christ through the Spirit" is more definite and more Christological; but it is really implied from the context in the words of the Confession, "much less can men not professing the Christian religion be saved in any other way whatsoever." The difficulty is not overcome, for the problem is how men not professing the Christian religion can be saved when they never heard of Christ and his salvation. By the recognition in the third section that there are elect persons, apart from infants and incapables, "who are not outwardly called by the word" and yet are regenerated and saved by Christ through the Spirit, "who worketh when, and where, and how He pleaseth," we have the recognition of the elect persons not professing the Christian religion. These are not saved by the light of nature, or the law of that religion they do profess, but by Christ through the Spirit, who saves them apart from the ministry of the word. The simple insertion of the "other elect persons" in section three makes the proposed change in section four unnecessary.

To adopt the revision of this chapter in its present form would be a mistake. It should be reserved for more careful consideration until some one can suggest a revision which will give satisfaction to all.

(4.) The third chapter, "Of God's Eternal Decree," is the one which gives chief difficulty to the church.

The omission of sections three and four of the old Confession and the enlargement of the old section five so as to take up into itself all that was essential in them is a real improvement. No words are added in this revision which were not in these sections except the phrase "an innumerable multitude of mankind," which is gain; and the substitution of "not on account of" for "without," which does not in the slightest degree change the doctrine, but which removes a misunderstanding of its meaning. This section might be adopted with propriety.

Section five is altogether different. The substitution of "saw

fit" for the Confessional and Biblical phrase "was pleased" is trivial and in bad taste. The omission of "own" from "his own will" is also trivial and unworthy. The addition of the clause, "Yet hath he no pleasure in the death of the wicked, nor is it his decree, but the wickedness of their own hearts, which restraineth and hindereth them from accepting the free offer of the gospel," might be allowed; but it should be condensed, and expressed in the style and phraseology of the Confession.

But the chief revision of section seven is entirely unsatisfactory. We know what the doctrine of the Confession is when it says, "The rest of mankind, God was pleased . . . for the glory of his sovereign power over his creatures to pass by, and to ordain them to dishonor and wrath for their sin," for the doctrine of preterition is a recognized doctrine of historical Calvinism about which there should be no dispute. But who can ever say with authority how we are to interpret the committee's substitute, "not to elect unto everlasting life, and them hath he ordained unto dishonor and wrath for their sin"? Not to elect, — what does it mean? It is only a negative of to elect. It has no historic meaning in our church or in any other church. Do the committee mean to imply that reprobation is too strong a word, preterition also too strong a word, and that "non-election" is a sufficient and satisfactory statement of the doctrine of predestination as applied to the reprobate? Reprobation is a virile term, it implies a positive decree. Preterition is a virile term, it implies deliberate action. But non-election is puerile, it suggests to us no decree, no consideration, no action, a mere negation. Where is the gain? What a strange consolation to offer to presbyteries who are shocked with the thought that their fellow-men in great masses should be excluded from the election of grace, to say, Brethren, they are not reprobated, as the old divines used to say; they have not been passed by, as we used to think; they have simply *not been elected*. Away with such petty juggling with historic terms, this miserable compromising! Let us be men! Let us be sincere, and true to our fathers and our God! The doctrine is hard to those who have not put themselves in the atmosphere of the seventeenth century, when it was a doctrine of real vital religion. But to the modern church it is offensive in its cold, hard, dogmatism. Let us blot it out altogether and remove the offense. Then we shall all have our freedom to believe it or not, and in any way we please. I should blush for shame if the great American Presbyterian Church could bring itself to adopt such a contemptible subterfuge.

What, then, are we to learn from this revision, and what are we to do? This committee evidently have done what they ought not to have done, and they have left undone what they ought to have done.

They transcended their calling when they composed a new chapter Of the Work of the Holy Spirit, and when they undertook to revise fifteen chapters where the church asked for no revision. They have made sad failures in every one of these efforts except the substitution of "condemnation" for "damnation" in two instances.

They have left undone what they ought to have done. They have not given a fuller expression of the love of God to the world. They have not made successful revisions of the four chapters which they are appointed to revise.

What they have done amounts simply to this. They have thrown light upon the practicability of revision. We see that there are only three safe methods of revision: (1) the easy way of omission of doubtful passages. In this they have been successful in several instances. This method should be carried further. (2.) The more difficult method of condensation, adhering strictly to the language of the Confession. In this they have succeeded in a single instance in chapter iii. (3.) The occasional substitution of modern words for ancient words and expressions which convey a false meaning. Such a strictly limited revision is possible. But every addition that this committee propose in the way of new matter is faulty, and some of them are shockingly bad. Such additions should be strictly, and sternly, and resolutely forbidden. What then should we do? Either stop the work of revision altogether, or else keep the revision movement longer in the field.

To run the risk of a hasty adoption of such a revision would bring the church between Scylla and Charybdis; and while it is possible that the revision party may prevail in the church, it will be at the cost of secession of conservatives on the one side, who steadfastly adhere to the old doctrines, and who will be offended by the new statements; and the secession of progressives on the other side, who will refuse to subscribe to the new statements of the doctrines of Holy Scripture, creation, and monastic vows.

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