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Supplement

TO

“The Confessional Crisis”

ANNEXA

BY

JOHN T. DUFFIELD

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SUPPLEMENT

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TO

"THE CONFSSIONAL CRISIS"

John Thomas Duffield

- I. Confessional Supralapsarianism.**
 - II. Facts and Truths Anent the Confessional Problem.**
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CONFESSIONAL SUPRALAPSARIANISM

The question at issue between revisionists and anti-revisionists, respecting Chapter III. of the Confession, *is not a question of orthodoxy*. The intimation that it is is unfounded and in the interests of the truth should be scrupulously avoided. The question does not involve the fundamental doctrine of the Calvinistic system—the absolute sovereignty of God. It does not involve the essential doctrine of the Calvinistic system—the election of some men to everlasting life and the consequent “passing by” of others. In opposing the revision of Chapter III., elaborate defenses of these undisputed doctrines are irrelevant and misleading. The question relates purely and solely to the *place* of Election *in the order* of the Divine Decrees.

The Divine decrees, included in the one Divine decree which is eternal, cannot be conceived of as having a *chronological* order. Events however, the result of Divine decrees, occurring as they do in time in a certain order, we cannot but conceive of the corresponding decrees as having a corresponding *logical* or *natural* order. The decree to cause “the grass to grow for

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cattle and herb for the service of man ” presupposes a decree to create the earth and the creatures that dwell upon it.

The question at issue is this : Are we to conceive of the decree of election and consequent passing by of the non-elect as *preceding* or *succeeding* the decree to permit the fall ? If the former, then in the discrimination between the elect and the non-elect mankind were regarded as *mere creatures*, not as sinners, and the decree is to be regarded as an exercise of God's sovereign *power*. If the latter, mankind being regarded as *sinners*, election was an exercise of Divine *mercy*, and the passing by of the non-elect an act of Divine *justice*. The former view is known as supra-lapsarianism, the latter as infra-(or sub-)lapsarianism—the etymology of the words indicating their meaning.

The statement of the doctrine of Election in the Confession differs from the statement in the Shorter Catechism, and the statements of it in all the other Reformed or Calvinistic symbols, except the so-called Lambeth Articles, formulated by a few English divines in 1595 which never had any ecclesiastical authority, and the “Articles of Religion ” adopted by the Irish Church in 1615 and were superseded by the adoption of the Thirty-nine Articles of the English Church in 1635.

Whether the Westminster Confession differs or not from the other Reformed or Calvinistic symbols is not a question of opinion to be decided by authority, but a question of fact to be decided by the documents.

In comparing the Westminster Confession with the other Calvinistic Confessions, two points are to be

noted : first, the *order* of doctrinal statement ; second, the *terms* in which the doctrine of Predestination is stated.

In the Gallican Confession of 1559, the draft of which it is said was prepared by Calvin, the doctrines are stated in the following order: (1) Concerning God, (2) The Scriptures, (3) The Trinity, (4) Creation in general, (5) Providence, (6) The Creation of Man, (7) The Fall, (8) Original Sin, (9) Predestination. Predestination is stated as follows:

“From this corruption and general condemnation in which all men are plunged, God, according to his eternal and immutable counsel, calleth those whom he hath elected by his goodness and mercy in our Lord Jesus Christ, without consideration of their works, to display in them the richness of his mercy, leaving the rest in this same corruption and condemnation to show in them his justice.”

The doctrine is stated in substantially the same order and terms in the Belgic Confession of 1561, one of the doctrinal Standards to-day of the Reformed Church of Holland, Belgium, and the United States.

The Synod of Dort in 1615 may be said to have been an Ecumenical Council of the Calvinistic Churches of that day. In addition to the representatives of the Reformed Church of Holland and Belgium there were present delegates from the Calvinistic Churches of France, Switzerland, Germany, England, and Scotland. The Canons adopted were intended to be an authoritative statement of Calvinistic doctrine, called for by the Arminian controversy at the close of the sixteenth and beginning of the seventeenth century. In

the Canons, the "First Head of Doctrine," is "Divine Predestination." Under this head, Article I. treats of the Fall; Article II. of the "love of God manifested in sending his only begotten Son into the world that whosoever believeth on him might not perish but have everlasting life"; Article III. of the Gospel; Articles IV. and V. of Salvation by faith. Then follows the doctrine of Election as follows:

"Election is the unchangeable purpose of God, whereby before the foundation of the world he hath, out of mere *grace*, according to the sovereign good pleasure of his will, chosen, from the whole human race *which had fallen through their own fault from their primitive state of rectitude into sin and destruction*, a certain number of persons to redemption in Christ."

This is followed by a paragraph in which it is stated:

"The express testimony of sacred Scripture is that not all, but some only, are elected, while others are passed by in the eternal decree, whom God, out of his sovereign, most just, irreprehensible and unchangeable good pleasure, hath decreed to leave in the common misery into which they have wilfully plunged themselves . . . for the declaration of his *justice*."

With the order and form of statement of the doctrine in question in the Shorter Catechism all are familiar—the Creation of man in the image of God, the Fall, then Election, in answer to the question: "Did God leave all mankind to perish in an estate of sin and misery?"

It will be observed that *all these Calvinistic symbols are explicitly and distinctly infra-lapsarian.*

When we turn to the Westminster Confession we find a striking difference from the other Confessions in both *the ordinal place* and *the form of statement* of the doctrine of Predestination. It immediately follows the chapters relating to the Scriptures, to God and the Trinity, and *precedes* Creation, Providence and the Fall. Its ordinal place is *supra-lapsarian*. There is an equally marked difference from the other Confessions in the form of statement. Instead of an election out of the mass of mankind regarded as *sinner*s in the exercise of Divine *mercy*, and the passing by of the non-elect in the exercise of divine *justice*, the race, so far as is indicated, are regarded *as mere creatures*, and the discrimination is simply an exercise of sovereign *power*. The statement is as follows:

“By the decree of God, for the manifestation of his glory, some men and angels are predestinated to everlasting life, others foreordained to everlasting death.”

The statement is a bald, apathetic, didactic declaration of the destiny of immortal creatures, some to everlasting blessedness, others to everlasting perdition. That in the decree mankind were regarded as sinners would seem to be excluded by placing angels and men in the same category.

How is this exceptional form of statement and ordinal place of the doctrine of Predestination in the Westminster Confession to be explained?

In an ordinary logically-constructed plan or purpose what is last in execution is first in intention. So regarding Divine Predestination, supralapsarianism

seemed the more logical theory and was accordingly accepted by a number of the Westminster divines. When dealing however with superlogical truths, logical inferences are not always reliable. The framers of the Confession recognized this when to the declaration in Sec. 1, Chap. III., that "God from all eternity did unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass," they added, "yet so as thereby God is not the author of sin." They disavow the logical conclusion from their premise. The New England theologian, Dr. Emmons, with more courageous logic than the Westminster Assembly on this point, maintained that God was the author of sin. The Westminster divines followed their logic to the extent of so stating the doctrine of Predestination that it would, to say the least, admit of the interpretation that God foreordained some men, regarded as mere creatures, to everlasting death. The Supreme rule of faith is not human reason but Holy Scripture. Dr. Charles Hodge undoubtedly expresses the common faith, not only of the Presbyterian Church but of Christendom, when he says:

"The supralapsarian theory is not consistent with the Scriptural exhibition of the character of God. He is declared to be a God of merey and justice. But it is not compatible with these Divine attributes that men should be foreordained to misery and eternal death as innocent, that is before they had apostatized from God." Theology Vol. II, p. 319. Dr. A. A. Hodge says: "This scheme is unquestionably the most logical of all. But the case is too high and too vast for the *a priori* application and enforcement of the ordinary

rules of human judgment." "This view represents God as reprobating the non-elect by a sovereign act, without any respect to their sins, simply for his own glory. This appears to be inconsistent with the Divine righteousness, as well as with the teachings of Scripture." *Outlines of Theol.*, p. 233.

In deference, doubtless, to the infra-lapsarians in the Assembly, it is stated in Sec. 7, Chap. III., that "for the glory of His sovereign power over His creatures, God was pleased to pass by the rest of mankind (the non-elect), and ordain them to dishonor and wrath *for their sins* to the praise of His glorious justice." The inconsistency of this form of statement with that in Sec. 3, and in fact with itself in stating that an act of Divine *justice* in the punishment of sinners was an exercise of Sovereign *power* over creatures, is readily explicable. There were infra-lapsarians as well as supra-lapsarians in the Westminster Assembly. As to which were dominant there is some question. Dr. Hodge says: "Twisse, the Prolocutor, was a zealous supra-lapsarian; the great majority were on the other side. The symbols of that Assembly"—which expression includes the Shorter Catechism—"while they clearly imply infra-lapsarianism, were yet so framed as *to avoid offense* to those who adopted the supra-lapsarian view." *Theol. Vol. II.*, p. 317. Dr. Mitchell, the editor of the Minutes of the Assembly, by appointment of the Church of Scotland, says: "Care was taken to avoid the insertion of anything which could be regarded as *indicating a preference* for supra-lapsarianism." The implication in this state-

ment is that the majority were supra-lapsarian. According to Dr. Mitchell, in the Report of the Committee on the important Chapter on "The Divine Decree," the statement of the doctrine of Predestination, Chap. III., Sec. 3, as quoted above, was followed by the statement: "To bring this to pass God ordained to permit the fall." To this the infra-lapsarians objected as express supra-lapsarianism. After discussion, the report of which is meagre, the latter sentence was omitted.

From the above it appears that whilst our doctrinal symbols, including the Shorter Catechism, may be said to imply infra-lapsarianism, the form of statement of the doctrine of Predestination and its ordinal place in the Confession is as it is *that it might admit of a supra-lapsarian interpretation* and be acceptable to those who held that view.

Supralapsarianism in the Presbyterian Church has become obsolete. Not only so, but to many ministers, elders and deacons, as well as many of the laity, the Confessional form of statement admitting as it does and was intended to do of a supra-lapsarianism interpretation, is not only objectionable but offensive. Its retention subjects the Calvinistic system of doctrine to misapprehension and unmerited odium. It is presumed that the doctrinal symbols of a distinctively Confessional Church state as precisely and accurately as possible the actual faith of the Church. *This the Confession on the important doctrine of Predestination does not do.* The practical question, therefore, which the Presbyteries are now providentially called to decide,

in respect to the revision of Chapter III., is: Are the interests of the truth or of the Church promoted by the retention in our most prominent doctrinal Standard of a form of statement that admits of an interpretation so seriously objectionable, the only purpose served by its retention being to make conspicuous that in former years there were for a time some Presbyterians who held the view that is now repudiated?

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FACTS AND TRUTHS

TO BE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT IN SOLVING THE CONFSSIONAL PROBLEM.

1. A distinctive characteristic of the Presbyterian Church is, *its bond of union is a common faith*, formulated in a Confession stating both what Presbyterians hold in common with other branches of the Christian Church and what they hold distinctively as a separate branch of the Church of Christ.

2. There are three distinct uses of the Confession of Faith: *First*, to bear witness to what Presbyterians believe to be the truth taught in the Holy Scriptures; *second*, for the religious instruction of the members of the Church, including the children, as mentioned in the Directory of Worship; *third*, to secure "soundness in the faith" of office-bearers, especially the ministry, the Confession being the Standard.

3. Fidelity to the truth demands that the Confession of Faith of a Confessional Church should state as fully and accurately as possible the actual faith of the Church.

Does the Confession of Faith of the Presbyterian Church in the United States to-day fulfil this requirement?

4. Facts are stubborn things. They may be ignored; they cannot be undone. Unwillingness to give them unprejudiced consideration is un wisdom.

The following are indisputable facts:

(1) Ten years ago two-thirds of the Presbyteries deliberately expressed their desire for a revision of the Confession.

(2) Altho many in the Assembly of 1890 did not personally desire revision, in view of the desire for it so generally expressed the Assembly with entire unanimity recognized that the interests of the truth and the peace of the Church rendered a revision advisable, and took action accordingly. To secure a committee competent and representative of the entire Church, a special Committee of one from each Synod was appointed to select and nominate a Revision Committee. Among the eminent ministers selected were representatives of all our Theological Seminaries. A large proportion of the elders selected were lawyers of high rank in their profession, including several eminent jurists. No more competent committee could then or now be selected. The report of the nominating committee was unanimously adopted by a rising vote, and in devout acknowledgment of the influence of the Holy Spirit directing and disposing them to an entirely harmonious conclusion on so grave an issue on which there had been diversity of opinion and much earnest discussion in the religious press, the Presbyteries, and the General Assembly, the Assembly united in singing

the Doxology and were led in thanksgiving and prayer by the Moderator. Was this action of the highest Judicatory of our Church on a question of momentous importance to the interests of the Church and of the truth, taken with special solemnity and entire unanimity, but an illustration of the Confessional declaration that "All synods and councils since the Apostles' time may err and many have erred?" Was it a manifestation of unfaithfulness and disloyalty to "the system of doctrine contained in the Confession?" Was the conviction of the Assembly that they had been divinely directed in their action a delusion?

5. It is not necessary to recite in detail the result of this important action of the Assembly—the patient, painstaking, fidelity of the Committee; their Report, after two years' deliberation including a conference with the Presbyteries, recommending with a remarkable degree of unanimity twenty-eight changes in the Confession; the submission of these changes to the Presbyteries under peculiarly unfavorable adventitious circumstances—a pending trial for heresy and doubt as to the constitutionality of the Revision Committee. On the point just mentioned the precise facts, so far as we have observed, have not been recently stated, yet in the present crisis are entitled to weighty consideration in estimating the significance of the action of the Presbyteries in '93 on the changes recommended by the Committee. A prominent member of the Revision Committee and of the Assembly of '92, an eminent lawyer, an authority in his profession, expressed it as his opinion that the Committee was not consti-

tutionally constituted, and that changes in the Confession made on their recommendation would be unconstitutional and would be so regarded by the Civil Courts. He accordingly moved that the recommendations of the Committee be referred to a Committee constitutionally constituted to consider and report to the Assembly of '93. After brief discussion this motion was laid on the table and the motion to submit the recommendations of the Revision Committee was adopted. Against this action *fifty-one* members of the Assembly, including many of the most prominent ministers and elders, entered their protest. Under these circumstances, with the liability of involving the Church in litigation in case the proposed amendments were adopted, forty-five Presbyteries declined to vote on the amendments, and upwards of sixty voted indiscriminately against their adoption. Nevertheless, of the one hundred and seventy-five voting Presbyteries over one hundred expressed their approval of twenty-six of the twenty-eight proposed changes, *twenty being approved by the conservative Presbytery of New Brunswick*. So far from this being "a test vote" and the result a "dismal," "decisive," "irrevocable" failure, the action of the Presbyteries clearly indicated that had the changes proposed been submitted to the Presbyteries under circumstances that would have permitted of action on their merits and advisability they would have been approved by the Presbyteries with a degree of unanimity similar to that with which they were recommended by the Revision Committee.

6. Two important facts were made manifest, and irreversibly manifest, by the Revision of 1890-1892: *first*, that there were good and sufficient reasons for the desire for revision so generally expressed in 1890; *second*, that *the Confession does not state as fully and accurately as possible the actual faith of the Church.*

To maintain, as the exigency of debate has rendered necessary, the incompetency of the Revision Committee, and that their judgment on the subject entrusted to them with special deliberation and solemnity by the General Assembly is not entitled to weighty consideration, is simply an exhibition of blind zeal in the advocacy of an erroneous foregone conclusion, an unwitting acknowledgment that a position which requires such a defence is indefensible.

7. The stubbornness of fact being as it is, and the power of truth being what it is, the incomplete result of the movement for revision in 1890-1892 *could not be final.* Further agitation on the subject was inevitable because reasonable and righteous. Had not the Church been wearied with the distracting and protracted excitement of a heresy trial, and also the extended and more or less exciting discussion of the twenty-eight Revision overtures, the motion of Mr. Junkin in 1892 would have been immediately renewed. Under the circumstances however, immediate action for revision was not deemed advisable. Soon after the Church was virtually challengd to another trial for heresy. This resulted in an exciting agitation which was but recently terminated.

8. When a body is in a state of unstable equilibrium a slight disturbance will produce a decided movement toward stability. The intemperate denunciation of a statement in the Confession by a conspicuous minister nominally Presbyterian, followed by his sensational withdrawal from the Church, was the occasion, not the cause, of the present movement for a restatement of the faith of the Church. The reopening without further delay of the Confessional question left unsettled in 1893 was felt to be desirable. Accordingly thirty-eight Presbyteries overtured the Assembly on the subject. After due deliberation and discussion the Committee on Bills and Overtures, appointed without reference to this question and representing the different sections of the Church, *unanimously recommended* that the matter of a restatement of the faith of the Church be submitted to the Presbyteries. By a decided vote of the Assembly the recommendation was adopted.

9. The stubborn facts mentioned, and others to be mentioned, which some unwisely would ignore, but which can never be undone—that scarce ten years ago two-thirds of the Presbyteries deliberately expressed their desire for a revision of the Confession; that in view of this fact the Assembly of 1890 unanimously decided that a revision was advisable, and accordingly appointed with special deliberation and care a Committee to revise the Confessions of unquestionable competency, loyalty to our doctrinal Standards, and representative of the entire Church; that after two years' deliberation they reported more than a score of changes of more or less import-

ance, "the adoption of which would not in any way impair the integrity of the Calvinistic system of doctrine;" that under peculiarly unfavorable circumstances these changes with but two exceptions were approved by nearly two-thirds of the voting Presbyteries; that the failure of revision under the circumstances mentioned resulted in the renewal of the agitation for a restatement of the faith of the Church; that the desire for some restatement was so general and so reasonable that the Committee on Bills and Overtures unanimously recommended that the question be submitted to the Presbyteries; that this recommendation was adopted by the Assembly with substantial unanimity; that the question has been submitted to the Presbyteries without the restriction with which it was submitted in 1890 that no changes should be considered that would impair the integrity of the Calvinistic system—these stubborn facts are "signs of the times" from which, if duly considered, three things may be "discerned": *First*, that some restatement of the faith of the Church in the near future *is foreordained*. *Second*, that neither the peace nor the purity of the Church would be promoted by another defeat of the conservative Revision of 1892. *Third*, that on the important question of the doctrinal Standard, for the future, of the Presbyterian Church in the United States, a vote that no restatement is desirable and the further consideration of the subject should be dismissed, will have about the same effect on the result as a vote for the Prohibition candidate for the Presidency at the ensuing election.

10. The following response to the communication from the Assembly's Committee would seem to be advisable:

In view of all the facts and considerations that should be taken into account, some restatement of the faith is desirable, and the most speedy and satisfactory solution of the Confessional problem would be reached by submitting to the Presbyteries the amendments recommended by the Revision Committee of 1892, so far as approved by a majority of the voting Presbyteries, with such provision for the amendment of Chap. III as may be deemed advisable.

11. A vote that the revision of the Confession proposed is not desirable is, in general, a solemn declaration that it is not desirable that the Confession of Faith of our Church should state as fully and accurately as possible the actual faith of the Church.

12. A vote against the revision proposed is a solemn declaration of preference for a form of statement of the doctrine of Predestination that admits of the interpretation, and is as it is that it might admit of it, that in the exercise of His sovereign *power*, God predestinated some men to everlasting life and foreordained others to everlasting death, regarded not as sinners but as *mere creatures*—a theory which Dr. Charles Hodge pronounces “inconsistent with the Scriptural exhibition of the Divine attributes;” instead of the form of statement of the doctrine by Augustine, expressed in the Gallican Confession by Calvin, explicitly stated in the Canons of the Synod of Dort the doctrinal Standard of the Reformed Church of Holland and the United States, the doctrine implied in the Shorter

Catechism—namely, that mankind having fallen, and being thereby *sinner*s, some were elected to everlasting life in the exercise of Divine *mercy*, others not elected in the exercise of Divine *justice*—the doctrine taught in all our Theological Seminaries, and is the common faith of the Church to-day.

13. A vote against the revision proposed is a solemn declaration of preference for the retention of the expression, “elect infants,” which admits of the interpretation, and was adopted because it admits of it, that some infants dying in infancy are foreordained to everlasting death; instead of the unambiguous statement: “Infants dying in infancy are included in the covenant of grace”—the doctrine contained in the Theologies of Hodge and Shedd, taught in all our Seminaries, and the common faith of the Church to-day.

14. A vote against the revision proposed is a solemn declaration that the voter does not desire that our Confession should contain a declaration of the love of God for all men, and the duty of the Church to preach the Gospel to every creature—the reason for not desiring such a statement being that the majority in a Presbyterian Assembly in the middle of the seventeenth century did not believe in the love of God for all men, maintaining that in John 3:16, “the world,” meant “the elect,” and accordingly after deliberation and discussion declined making the declaration mentioned.

15. A vote against the proposed revision is a solemn declaration that a connected, formally didactic, statement in the Confession respecting the Person and work of the Holy Spirit is not desirable.

16. A vote against the proposed revision is a solemn declaration of the following additional preferences: (1) The retention in the Confession of the statement that it is sinful to refuse to take an oath when required to do so by a civil magistrate; (2) the retention of the statement that "the Pope of Rome is antichrist, the man of sin and son of perdition;" (3) for "papists and other idolaters," instead of "adherents of false religions;" (4) for "damnation" instead of "condemnation;" (5) that the atonement was a satisfaction to "the Father's justice," instead of "Divine justice;" (6) that the declaration of the "power" of office-bearers "to remit and retain sins," and "to open and shut the kingdom of kingdom" should not be qualified by inserting the words "ministerial and declarative" before the word "power;" and in a number of other particulars, a preference for the phraseology of the Westminster divines instead of that recommended, in many instances with entire unanimity, by the Revision Committee.

17. It is neither a good nor sufficient reason for opposing revision that office-bearers are not required to accept the *ipsissima verba*. For *first*, if the only purpose of the Confession were its use in the ordination of office-bearers it would be none the less desirable that the *ipsissima verba* state as fully and accurately as possible the actual faith of the Church. *Second*, the objection has no relevancy to a proposition to amend the Confession by the addition of a new Chapter, such as that on "The Gospel." *Third*, it wholly ignores the important use of the Confession in the religious

instruction of the members of the Church, and also its prominently important use as a testimony to other Churches and the world as to what Presbyterians believe is the teaching of Holy Scripture.

18. The question at issue *is not a question of orthodoxy*. The intimation that the revision proposed would in any way impair the integrity of the Calvinistic system is wholly unfounded, is misleading, and in the interest of the truth should be scrupulously avoided. The character of the Revision Committee and their unanimous declaration settles the question beyond the possibility of excusable misapprehension or misrepresentation.

19. The fact that there are those who desire a new Creed that might impair the integrity of the Calvinistic system and would not assert the Confessional doctrine of inspiration, is neither a good nor sufficient reason for opposing a revision that does not impair the integrity of the Calvinistic system and retains the Confessional doctrine respecting the Scriptures. The fact mentioned is a weighty and urgent reason for the very opposite course. To assign it as a reason for voting with the new Creedists on the question of revision is simply climacteric illogicality.

Ecclesiastical as well as secular politics makes strange bed fellows. The anti-revisionists are an incongruous coalition of ultra-conservatives and liberals. The former oppose revision under the delusion that they are promoting orthodoxy by retaining in the Confession hyper-Calvinistic statements with the understanding that they may be repudiated. The latter,

with more of the wisdom of this world than their inconsequent-thinking allies, oppose revision, knowing that an unrevised Confession means *a new doctrinal Standard*—whether nominally “a new Creed” or the less revolutionary designation “a declarative statement,” and whether in terms “substitutional” or “supplementary”—*that will supersede the Confession*. In any serious conflict, whether in defense of civil rights or of the faith, it is not wisdom to do what the adversary wishes you to do. Had the Revision of '92 been adopted the peace of the Church would not now be disturbed by agitation for a new Creed.

20. Opposing revision is no evidence of *zeal for orthodoxy*. One of the most conspicuous anti-revisionists in 1892, and now, avows his approval of the action of the Presbytery of New York in deciding, that published heresies so flagrant that one General Assembly in terms and another impliedly with virtual unanimity requested their author peaceably to withdraw from the Church, were consistent with subscription to our Standards and might be preached by a Presbyterian minister with impunity. There are others than old Dr. Beecher who have reason, as he said he had, to thank God that consistency was not essential to salvation.

21. Revision is opposed on the ground that an historical document so venerable as the Westminster Confession should not be marred by amendment, but should be preserved in its integrity. The objection is wholly irrelevant to the issue. No action of Presbytery or General Assembly can mar or mend the Westmin-

ster Confession *as an historical document*. What is written is written. The Confession under discussion is the Confession of Faith of the Presbyterian Church in the United States in this year of our Lord 1900. It purports to state and should state as accurately as possible the faith of the Church to-day. It is constitutionally amendable, has been amended, and may be again when fidelity to the truth requires it. The question therefore, has nothing to do with the venerableness of the antiquity of the Westminster Confession, or its logical symmetry, or its rhetorical lucidity and winsomeness, but simply this : *Does our Confession of Faith state as fully and accurately as possible the faith of the Church?* This is no longer an open question. The facts above mentioned are the answer. We may however say, it would not mar but mend the Confession to omit supralapsarian predestination and "elect infants" and insert a Chapter on the Gospel and one on the Person and work of the Holy Spirit; it would not *impair* but *repair* the form of statement of the Calvinistic system of doctrine, to incorporate the changes recommended by the Revision Committee.

22. The position is not ethically defensible that while there are undoubtedly changes in the Confession that would be desirable, any change under existing circumstances would be untimely. In sacred no less than in secular matters, when required to make a statement it is always timely to state what we believe to be the truth.

23. The Confession revised as recommended by the Committee bears a relation to the present Confes-

sion analogous to that of the Revised version of the Scriptures to the Common or Accepted version. On a question of textual accuracy or grammatical translation the former version is the more authoritative. On a question as to the actual faith of the Presbyterian Church in the United States to-day, the Confession as revised is more authoritative than the unrevised Confession and would be so recognized by our ecclesiastical courts. No one will ever be condemned for heresy, or even accused of it, for teaching as recommended by the Revision Committee. Is it not desirable that the nominal Standard of the faith of the Church to-day should correspond in form with the actual?

24. Some wish the Confession to remain as it is but accompanied with "an explanatory statement" respecting such matters as call for explanation. Do the brethren who advocate such an explanatory statement appreciate to what they are committing themselves if the statement be at all complete and accurate? To state what the Church now believes on the several questions involved will not explain why certain statements occur in the Confession. On some of the more important points the explanation if accurate would be somewhat as follows: (1) The form of statement of Predestination and the expression "elect infants" are as they are because there were those in the Westminster Assembly who believed that "some men"—that is, some of the human race, including possibly if not probably some "infants dying in infancy"—regarded as *mere creatures*, were "foreordained to everlasting death." (2) The Confession does not contain a decla-

ration of the love of God for all men, because there were those in the Westminster Assembly who did not believe it, maintaining that in John 3:16 "the world" meant the elect. (3) The Confession declares that "it is a sin to refuse an oath touching anything that is good and just being imposed by lawful authority" because the right of private judgment in the interpretation of the Saviour's injunction, "Swear not at all," was not recognized in the middle of the seventeenth century. (4) The Confession declares "the Pope of Rome is antichrist, the man of sin and son of perdition" because that was the common faith of Protestants two hundred and fifty years ago. In "an explanatory statement" similar explanations should be made of the statements and phraseology in more than a score other instances which a Committee, carefully selected as "expert in all customs and questions which are among" Presbyterians, and solemnly entrusted by the General Assembly with the duty of revising the Confession, recommended should be changed. And it would be eminently appropriate for the "explanatory statement" to explain why the necessity for any explanatory statement should not be removed by an emendation of the text.

25. Some approve of the retention of the Confession unrevised but accompanied with "a declarative statement" of the faith of the Church to-day. Such a document, whether nominally "a declarative statement" on "a new Creed," and whether nominally "supplemental" or "substitutional," would be a new doctrinal Standard that would practically supersede

our present Standards. To this solution of the Confessional problem there are several objections obviously serious—if duly considered, fatal.

First, Whether it is intended that the new Standard shall *by a majority vote* of the Presbyteries be published in “The Constitution,” and incorporated in the ordination vow as either a supplement or a substitute, does not yet appear. This would be technically Constitutional, but it would violate the spirit and intent of the Constitutional rule respecting amendments of the Confession. Should this course be adopted it would involve the Church in litigation and would probably end in schism.

Second, The doctrinal basis of the Reunion of 1860, and also of 1758, was our present doctrinal Standards. They were and are Constitutionally amendable. If changes are desirable, and if, instead of making changes by constitutional amendment they are made by the addition of a new doctrinal Standard, even if this were approved by a two-thirds majority, it would be extra-constitutional and would be a violation of the Plan of Reunion that would probably involve the Church in litigation and possibly end in schism.

Third, In view of the deliverances of two recent Assemblies with virtual unanimity of steadfast adherence to our present doctrinal Standards, the formulation of a new doctrinal Standard that would be acceptable to any considerable portion of the Church would seem to be impracticable. Among the advocates of such statement there is considerable diversity of opinion as to what it should be. If left to themselves

to frame it, as they would be, should they unite on a form acceptable to themselves, there is little reason to believe it would be to revisionists and conservative anti-revisionists. A new Creed based on the doctrinal Catechism framed by unofficial representatives of several evangelical Churches in Great Britain including the English Presbyterian Church, has been suggested. The first article of the proposed Creed is as follows: "We believe that we find the word of God in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments." Does anyone imagine that such a declaration of faith respecting the Scriptures would be acceptable to more than an inconsiderable minority of our Presbyteries? And yet if we mistake not the main incentive in the movement for a new doctrinal Standard is a new statement of the faith of the Church respecting the inspiration, infallibility and authority of the Scriptures.

Fourth, Any changes in the Confession, that would not impair the Calvinistic system or the Confessional doctrine respecting the Scriptures, and are deemed desirable, could be made Constitutionally and more judiciously, by an emendation of the text of the Confession. What possible interest of the Church or of the truth would be promoted by publishing the Confession unchanged and accompanying it with a document that would make the objectionable phraseology of the Confession, its antiquated misstatements, and its serious omissions permanently conspicuous?

26. In adopting the changes recommended in '92, the Revisers were influenced by no other consideration

than the merits and desireableness of the amendments proposed. In view of their unquestionable competency, their loyalty to the Confession, and their official character as representatives of the entire Church, specially selected, and entrusted by the Assembly with special solemnity and cordial unanimity to revise the Confession, it would seem but reasonable in the present Confessional crisis, that the Presbyteries should have the opportunity—*which they have never had*—of considering and acting on the changes recommended, on their merits unhampered by adventitious considerations. In view of the representative character of the Committee it is reasonable to believe that if the changes recommended should be submitted and considered by the Presbyteries solely on their merits, they would be approved with a degree of unanimity similar to that with which they were approved by the Revision Committee.

27. The fact that however the Confession might be revised there would be some to whom it would not be acceptable is neither a good nor sufficient reason for not allowing the Presbyteries the privilege of expressing their approval or disapproval, unhampered by adventitious circumstances, of changes recommended by a Committee carefully selected for their expert competency and reliability in judgment, and entrusted by the General Assembly unanimously with the duty of revising the Confession in response to the desire for revision *deliberately expressed by two-thirds of the Presbyteries*

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