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I. Literary.

SHOULD WE ASSERT IN OUR CREED THAT ALL INFANTS DYING IN INFANCY ARE ELECT?

BY PROF. THOMAS C. JOHNSON, D. D., LL. D.

First. The question is not whether the members and ordained rulers of our church *believe* that all infants dying in infancy are saved.

As a matter of fact, there is a general belief of this sort. Some of our people doubt it. Some of them do not believe that the infants of heathen and of ungodly parents are amongst the elect, and so amongst the saved. But that there is a general belief of this sort can hardly be doubted. If this belief, however, were universal, the bare existence of the belief could not give our church the warrant to put the belief into the creed. Something more than the universality of a belief is required to entitle that belief to expression in the church's creed. A few instances will show this. During the second and third centuries the doctrine of baptismal regeneration became an almost universal belief in the church. It crept into the creed. Who of you doubt that it was wrong to put it there? During these and the succeeding centuries the doctrines of the special priesthood and sacrifice, and the doctrine of transubstantiation, became almost universal beliefs and were made parts of the creed. Who here doubts that this was wrong? In 1861 the belief that all Presbyterians, North, South, East and West, ought to support the national government at Washington, became the belief of the majority of old school Presbyterians, and accordingly the General Assembly sitting in Philadelphia in May of that year, passed the

infamous Spring resolutions in the effort to pledge them to this support. Who here doubts that this was wrong? In 1865, the Old School Assembly North, acting on the *beliefs* of the great body of its members, ordered that all "Presbyteries examine every minister applying for admission from any Presbytery or ecclesiastical body in the Southern States on the following points": First, as to whether he had in any way countenanced the rebellion; second, "as to whether he holds that the system of negro slavery in the South is a divine institution," and that "it is the peculiar mission of the Southern Church to conserve the institution." We should be much surprised to hear any one in this audience attempting to justify these steps. The fact that a given belief is the belief of the majority in the church, or the belief of the whole body, does not ground a right to put that belief into a creed.

It may be the natural thing for such a belief to be put there, but its naturalness does not prove it the right thing. It is, in fact, an act of usurpation and of oppression to put it there on the mere basis of the prevalence of the belief. Thus the insertion of the doctrine of sacramental regeneration was an usurpation of the prerogative of God, whose it is to say how he shall be viewed and worshipped; and it was an act oppressive to every believer in the true divinely ordained significance of the rite of baptism. The insertion of the doctrines of the special priesthood, altar and sacrifice, was a similar act of irreverent usurpation of the divine prerogative and an act of oppression. And the acts of making the new terms of discipleship, attempted in the Spring resolutions, and subsequent acts of the Northern General Assembly, were also acts of usurpation of the crown rights of King Jesus, the only head and law-giver of the church.

Not all, but some of those who advocate the change in our creed with regard to infants dying in infancy, seem to hold that if the people of our church and their office bearers generally, believe that all infants dying in infancy are saved, then the change should be made. But there are other questions to ask. It is a heathen adage that runs, *Vox populi vox Dei*. It is not a Christian adage. The Christian has learned that the voice of man, unless it is guided by the clear light of revelation, cannot with much safety be put down as the voice of God, and particularly when the voice makes declarations concerning matters moral and spiritual.

An additional question to be settled before it can be determined whether a belief is to go in the creed is its scriptural basis—whether God has taught the thing whose insertion is contemplated.

It is, of course, irreverent usurpation for the church to attempt to declare the destiny of little children dying in infancy unless God has declared it. And it is an act of oppression for the church to publish a creed which is to be believed by those who hold the Bible as of ultimate authority if the creed attempts to speak where the Bible is silent. This is to attempt something at war with the very genius of the Christian life which is a life of faith in God; for the creed-makers in such a case do put themselves in the place of God, and so against God and over his children. It is gross oppression.

We may be permitted to beg that no hearer will be so petty as to make us put the belief in universal infant salvation on a par, in all respects, with the beliefs of baptismal regeneration, the special priesthood, altar, sacrifice, transubstantiation, the new terms of discipleship made by the Assembly of 1861, sitting in Philadelphia, etc. The purpose for which we have used these illustrations was perfectly legitimate. This purpose was to show that something more is needed in order to insert a belief into a creed than the generality of the belief, or, indeed, than the universality of it.

Second. Again, the question is not whether the members and ordained rulers of our church have *some* Bible ground for hoping that all infants dying in infancy are saved or elect.

We believe that there is in our church a very general hope, founded, in part at least, *on the probable teaching of Scripture*, that all children dying in infancy are saved. There are some who entertain grave doubts about the salvation of heathen infants dying in infancy, the infants of the antediluvians cut down by the flood, and the infants of God's enemies generally. An occasional man has been heard to say boldly that he did not believe the deceased infants of God's enemies are saved. There is perhaps a universal hope that the children of believers dying in infancy are saved.

For our part, we are free to confess that we entertain a good hope that all infants dying in infancy are saved; and that we base such a hope on the Scripture teaching. An argument of

no mean force may be constructed in favor of the salvation of all such infants; from the analogy of faith, from the nature of future existence as presented in the Scriptures, and from Scripture statements bearing more or less directly on the point.

Such an argument might be made very much stronger than any made by any advocate of the change now considered, so far as they have fallen within our notice.

Following in the wake of one of the most vigorous reasoners that God blessed the church with, twenty-five years ago, I argue, along this line, for a good hope of the salvation of all infants dying in infancy, as follows:

“First. There is nothing in the grounds or conditions of salvation, as stated in the gospel, to interpose a barrier to our belief in the salvation of all dead children. It is not on account of ‘works’ which they could not do; and though salvation is by faith, yet it is not for the sake of faith as a work of the sinner. They may be saved, therefore, simply ‘by grace,’ as adults are, and, therefore, can sing with them the same eternal song, ‘Worthy is the Lamb, who washed us in his own blood.’

“Second. Neither is there anything in the method of salvation, by the work of the Holy Spirit in renewing, to contravene this belief. But though he works through the word in the case of those who believe, he works without the word also, saith the Confession, ‘when and where and how he pleaseth,’ and, therefore, may regenerate the infant without, as in the case of the adult, working through the word.”

“Third. Neither is there any known ground of difficulty in the sovereign electing love of God. For just as the effectual call, and the offer accepted by the sinner, proves him to be one of the elect; so the call of the infant, away from the trouble and sin to come, may prove it to be one of the elect.

“Fourth. Neither is there any ground for supposing the dead children excluded from heaven, by reason of the doctrine that they are of a guilty and a depraved race; since the guilt of any case is removed by the atoning blood of Jesus, justifying the sinner, and procuring the grace of the Holy Spirit; and all for nothing in the saved moving him thereto, but only of his own free sovereign love; thus putting the adult and the infant upon the same level as to claim for grace.”

So far we have seen that there is no ground to deny the salvation of infants.

Fifth. As there is no ground in the analogy of faith to *deny*, so there is, on the contrary, much from which to affirm the salvation of infants dying in infancy. Thus infants dying in infancy because Adam sinned, also rise from the dead because Christ has risen. As certainly as by some relation to Adam's sin they die, so certainly by some relation to Christ in his work as Mediator, every one of them that dies shall burst forth from the grave, and 'the mortal shall put on immortality.' If, then, by virtue of the relation to Christ, that half of the curse is removed which relates to their physical nature, why not infer that, on the same ground of sovereign grace, the other half is removed, which relates to their spiritual nature?

Sixth. And this seems, again, to receive direct confirmation by the apostle's declaration in reference to the first and second Adam, "where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." For, if we count the aboundings of grace only in the number of adult sinners saved, this statement seems, to our narrow vision, not to be realized as fully as possible. The aboundings of sin in every past age have exceeded far the aboundings of grace. But it puts another face on the statement, when we conceive of the dead children as all called by Jesus Christ to himself. More than one-third of the race die under two, and more than one-half the race under five years of age. If these are counted for the kingdom of heaven, we set out in our estimate of the abounding of grace with over half the race redeemed in infancy, and to these add millions that, since Adam, have accepted the call! And when we have conceived of the vast majority thus gathered out of two thousand generations—then we may begin to see a fulness of meaning in the apostle's saying, "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound!"

Seventh. This view is again confirmed by all those Scriptures which describe the vast number of the redeemed in heaven. It is "a great multitude that no man can number." It is out of every nation and kindred and tongue, "and of course, therefore, out of some tribes that have not been evangelized," and who may be represented, therefore, by their infants gathered in infancy? It may be understood also relatively to the number not saved, and to the whole number of the race; and may, therefore, include the dead children.¹

¹ Points sixth and following I have modified somewhat.

Eighth. To these general views must be added the argument from the Scripture account of the retribution of the future of the lost. This retribution is generally described in a manner that takes no account of the dead children, since it is made to have reference to the moral action of the doomed. The condemnation is on the ground that they loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil. Their judgment is "according to their works." Their retribution is the reaping of a harvest of evil action in life. "He that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption." "What a man soweth that shall he also reap." And so of multitudes of Scriptures. A chief element of the retribution is to be the memory of sins done—none of which things can be predicated of the future existence of dead children.

Ninth. . . . We now come to the express declarations of Scripture touching children and their relation to the everlasting kingdom. Even in the Old Testament, with its very limited statements concerning the existence after death, we find David saying of his dead child, "I shall go unto him, but he shall not return unto me." This must mean, "I shall go unto him, whither he is gone, into his presence, where is fulness of joy and blessings forever more." Since there was no comfort in the thought that he would go to him in his grave, any more than in the like fact that he should go to Absalom in the grave. Besides, David indulges in no such truisms as "I shall go to the grave!" . . .

So the poor Shunanite mother could say by faith, "it is well with the child," though she had left his corpse in the prophet's chamber.

Tenth. We find, moreover, in the Old Testament, the same special claim to the Jewish children, as peculiarly his own, which Jesus sets up for them in the New Testament; and the same special indignation at the heartlessness which repelled them, as incompetent to enjoy the spiritual blessings of immortality. Saith Jehovah by Ezekiel (xvi. 21), in his terrible wrath at the horrible offerings of the children in idolatrous sacrifices: "They have slain *my* children, causing them to pass through fire." Thus laying claim to them as his peculiar possession. So also in Jeremiah xix. 4, 5, in reference to the same cruel practice, "They have filled this place with the blood of innocents;" therefore he gives utterance to his specially hot displeasure.

“In the New Testament I need only refer you to the very explicit declaration of Jesus, “Suffer little children—of such is the kingdom of heaven,” which, you will find, the more it is studied in connection with his indignation at the disciples, and with the nature of the kingdom of heaven, in its twofold aspect, as the church on earth, and the church of the redeemed, the more you will be impressed with the utter folly of supposing him to mean simply that adults must be simple and artless like little children to enter heaven; or, indeed, anything short of meaning that in the plan of redemption children are specially provided for, both in the kingdom on earth, the church visible, and the kingdom above, the church invisible.”

“*Eleventh.* As putting the capstone on this argument thus cumulating at every step, I must refer, though it be in a word, to the express declaration that in the vision of the great day John saw the dead, *small* and *great*—in the sense of little ones and full grown, as well as of humble and high position—stand before God.”

This is substantially the argument presented by Dr. Stuart Robinson, and for the most part presented in his own words. We have repeated his argument for two reasons, viz.: It is the strongest argument for the hope that all infants dying in infancy are saved that we have ever seen; and we feel like availing ourselves of the subsidiary support for this hope, coming from his great reputation as a Bible student.

But if this hope, based as it is on the probable teaching of Scripture, were universal in our church, the existence of it, thus based, would not ground a right to insert it in the creed.

We may not put into the creed anything but that which the Scriptures teach directly or by good and necessary inference. The avowed principle of creed formation, in our body, calls for no less. It calls for a *thus saith the Lord, or a good and necessary inference.* We may make no dogmatic statements, no confessional declarations, which are not directly, or by good and necessary inference, declared in Scripture.

This principle finds recognition in our standards, viz., Chap. I. § 6: “The whole counsel of God, concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man’s salvation, faith, and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture; unto which nothing

at any time is to be added," &c. ; Form of Government, Chap. II. § 3: "Christ, as King, has given to his church officers oracles and ordinances; and especially has he ordained therein his system of doctrine, government and discipline, and worship; all which are expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced therefrom; and to which things he commands that nothing be added, and that from them nought be taken away;" and in the second question in the Shorter Catechism and the third in the Larger, both which unitedly proclaim the Scriptures to be the only rule of faith and practice. According to these standards, then, to which all our office-bearers have pledged themselves, they cannot put into the creed anything but the clear teaching of Scripture, if it is to be distinctly and unhesitatingly affirmed. This principle of creed formation is not only obligatory on us by reason of our vows as presbyters; it is in itself right. It is immodest, irreverent and presumptuous to attempt to speak for God in dogmatic terms on subjects on which he has made no clear revelation of his will. It is in spirit adding to his word, a thing which the Bible clearly forbids. In making a creed as to the teaching of God in the Scriptures, it is ours to go as far as he goes, according to our lights, and to stop just where he stops. And it is oppressive to man to do otherwise. It is oppressive to every man in the communion to impose on the office-bearers in the communion the tenet of something not clearly taught in the Scriptures, as though it were clearly taught. It abridges the liberty of belief. It puts the unbiblical tenet on a par with the Bible tenets, and tends to produce schism.

But some one objects that the creed already contains certain sections that are not supported by a "thus saith the Lord," or a good and necessary inference. To which we observe that if our creed-makers in the past have made an occasional mistake as to the value of the grounds whence they drew support for certain dogmas, the mistakes are to be regretted; but the *principle* by which they were guided is to be admired. We are bound to respect the principle, and in all our creed-making to try to respect it. It is something vastly worse than nonsense to say that because there are certain credal statements in the Confession of Faith for which there is neither a thus saith the Lord nor a good and necessary inference, therefore we have the right

to put in still others similarly unsupported. One inconsistency grounds no right to be guilty of another.

If there really are such poorly-supported doctrines in our Confession, it may be the duty of those brethren who see the truth perfectly to agitate to have those doctrines cut out of the Confession. We say it may be their duty. We do not say it is, for there are reasons sometimes for hesitating to annul some things which should never have been enacted. For ourselves, we believe that most of the doctrines in the Confession whose Biblical basis has been impugned have the sufficient support; but, should one be suggested which has not, we would regard and treat the suggestion as irrelevant at this time. The objector cannot justify one infringement of principle by another infringement of principle. We shall not encourage any man to criticise our Confession by proposing now to show its Biblical basis. There is something better to do in this age of unrest than to increase the unrest. . To those who object that there are passages in the Confession unsupported by a thus saith the Lord or a good and necessary inference, and that the church of to-day may therefore put in another such passage, we respond, Then your conclusion is a *non sequitur*. You might as well say, if the fathers do wrong, the sons may do the same wrong, and that, too, although the fathers have labored to set forth the correct principle by which their own and their sons' conduct should be directed.

For, the principle of creed formation, that for every human dogma in a creed there should be a thus saith the Lord, or a good and necessary inference, is correct. A creed should express what is God's clear teaching; it is not to be the resultant of the wishes, or even of the wishes and probable inferences from the Scriptures, of the people, or the teaching of philosophy.

The people who wish to make our creed declare that all infants dying in infancy are amongst the elect must show a *thus saith the Lord, or a good and necessary inference*. We have examined with some care every Scripture-passage that has been adduced in favor of the proposed change, and find that they all fall short of certain proof. We are, therefore, forced to say on this subject, with Dr. Stuart Robinson, "The Scriptures, being intended for those who can understand them, and to declare to such the terms of their salvation, and the grounds of their hope

and comfort, without gratifying curiosity, nowhere expressly declare in direct terms that all infants are saved; while they do declare that the elect of God, adults and infants alike, shall be saved through the effectual working of the Holy Spirit."¹ When the Bible stops speaking the Confession should always stop, just as when the Bible speaks the Confession should fearlessly speak, "whether men will hear or whether they will forbear, nay even though they mock at and malign it."¹

But let us examine some of the passages which have been most relied on to support the doctrine that all infants dying in infancy are of the elect. One of these is 2 Sam. xii. 22, 23: "And he said, While the child was yet alive, I fasted and wept: for I said, Who can tell whether God will be gracious to me, that the child may live? But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me."

We all believe that David teaches here by a necessary implication the salvation of his deceased son. But does he teach anything at all about the salvation of other infants dying in infancy? Some suppose so. They see no reason why David's child should be saved and others not; and they entertain other suppositions of about equal force. But we remark that God may have had reasons for saving that child which he has not for saving others; and God may have given David, who was a prophet, to see the whereabouts and condition of his child without intending to teach him, or us, to whom his words have come, anything whatever as to the condition of children in general that have passed away in infancy. We remark again that this lad (vs. 14)² was the child of parents, one or both of whom were believers—a child of the covenant; standing, therefore, in a different relation to God from other children not of the covenant. There is nothing, indeed, to show that David looked at the child as one of a class, as saved because the class is saved; but if there were, we would naturally think of the children of the covenant as the class, and not of all children dying in infancy. These words are the words of a Jew. This is true and valid, notwithstanding the fact that this child was begotten in adultery.

This passage tells us certainly of one child; it tells us nothing certainly of any other child. Matt. xviii. 14: "Even so it is not

¹ *Discourses of Redemption*, p. 92.

² *Cf.* 2 Sam. v. 14 and 1 Chron. iii. 5.

the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish," is a passage which has been much relied upon by those who wish to amend this clause in the Confession of Faith. But they have misread the text. The verse is in that matchless contrast of God's concern for the one straying sheep and his concern for the ninety and nine that need no special attention. This *little one* is a straying sheep. He is not described as a lamb dead. Back further in the context we read (v. 6), "But whoso shall offend one of these little ones that believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were cast into the sea." These "*little ones*" spoken of in this verse are big enough to *have faith*. Our Lord describes them as "*these little ones that believe in me.*" They are spoken of throughout the passage, vs. 6-14, as believers, and not at all as infant children. They are looked upon as susceptible to offence; therefore as weak; but they are believers, therefore not infants.

A reasonable study of the passage in its connection is all that is needed to bear out the foregoing remarks. Such a study makes it clear that we have in the early part of the eighteenth of Matthew at least three paragraphs, the first including verses 1 to 5, in which alone is there any clear reference to small children; the second including verses 6 to 9, and the third verses 10 to 14. Pulling down the harmonies of Waddy, and Clark, and Robinson and Gardiner, we discover that they all find these paragraphs. One of these men heads Matthew xviii. 1-35, and parallel passages from the other synoptists, "Several Discourses with the Disciples," and finds one discourse in verses 1-5; another in verses 6-9; and another in verses 10, *et seq.* Nor is there any sign that these words Matt. xviii. 1-14, were all pronounced by our Lord at one session of his teaching. In the first of these paragraphs our Lord reproveth ambition by the example of a little child. In the second he teaches to avoid offending weak brethren, whom he describes, not as infant children, but as *little ones which believe on him*. In the third he propounds the *parable of the sheep gone astray*; and means one of the weaker ones that believe on him. It is very superficial to treat this chapter, made of short discourses, as if it were one.

We should also keep in mind that the word used of the *little ones* referred to in verses 6-14 is an entirely different word from

that used in the first paragraph; and that these little ones are little believers. John Calvin, in his "Harmony of the Evangelists," explains the phrase *little ones* as meaning weak Christians, in verses 6, 10 and 14; and says, "It is in the highest degree unreasonable that we should disdainfully reject those whom the Son of God has so highly esteemed. And even if the weak labor under imperfections which may expose them to contempt, our pride is not on that account to be excused; for we ought to esteem them not for the value of their virtues, but for the sake of Christ; and he who will not conform himself to Christ's example is too saucy and proud."

There is no ground for thinking that our Lord has any reference to infants in Matthew xviii. 14.

Mark x. 14-16: "Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven. Verily, I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein. And he took them up in his arms and blessed them."

These verses will not serve the advocates of the change in the Confession. To get at their meaning, let us ask certain questions, viz.: Whose children were referred to here? What did the persons presenting the children hope to get for them from Christ? Had they a right to expect these things for their children? How was our Lord affected by the opposition to the presenting of the children? What is the meaning of his declaration, "For of such is the kingdom of heaven?" What does he not say?

In answer to the first question, it may be fairly answered that the children were professed believers' children; that they were the children of Jews is at least highly probable, as his ministry was almost entirely confined to his own people, and as there is no note here of his being surrounded at the time by others. The parents of these children seem also to have been *believers*. This is indicated by the parallel passage in Luke xviii. 15-17, where we read, "And they brought unto him *also* infants." It is as if Luke had said, to quote the words of John Calvin, "that after they had experienced the various ways in which he assisted adults, they formed an expectation likewise in regard to *children*, that, if he *laid hands on them*, they would not leave him without having received some of the gifts of the Spirit. They seem to

have desired from Christ very much what the Christian people of to-day desire from him when they present their children to him in private prayer, and especially in that solemn rite of initiation into the church, viz., baptism. They had a right to expect these things. Their expectation was in accord with God's gracious provision for the children in the Old Testament church; and in accord with the usual association of parents and children in all God's covenant dealings with them.

The disciples opposed this presentation of the children, regarding them as unworthy of his attention. At this opposition our Lord was indignant, *much displeased*, as we read in Mark, *vexed*. And if we may judge from what he said, he was indignant that they practically denied the rights of the children to the blessings desired—some spiritual gift. He said, "Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, *for of such is the kingdom of heaven*. He seems to say to the disciples, You ought to have recognized that *of such is the kingdom of heaven*. Now, the disciples were incompetent to say who are members of the invisible church. To speak to this point required divine instruction. Our Lord must here have reference to that aspect of the kingdom of heaven which corresponds to the visible church. He teaches that the children of the believers who present them have a right to the privileges of the visible church. He was indignant at the disciples for standing between those children and their rights. When, then, he says, *for of such is the kingdom of heaven*, he does not say that all children are members of the invisible church; he does not even say that children are members of the visible church; what he does teach is that the children of credible believers have a right to the privileges of the visible church, and constitute, when presented a part of the visible church, the kingdom of heaven, in one of its aspects. It is to be further noted that our Lord is not here speaking of *infants dying in infancy* at all; but of living children, and so far as any man can say, of children some or all of whom were to grow up to maturity. If such an interpretation were on other grounds allowable, he could not be understood to teach that all young children are in a saved state, for the Scriptures teach those who have been regenerated cannot utterly fall away. And notoriously some infant children grow up, live, and die in wickedness, and give every evidence of going down to the grave unsaved. Once

more, if any one will contend that Christ teaches here that the young children before him were members of the invisible church, his teaching, of course, has no certain bearing on the destiny of other children. For he says nothing here as to whether all children are elect or not.

As a matter of fact, his teaching here is primarily of the relation of the children before him, and other children of the same class, to the visible church. He passes, in the sixteenth verse, to the humble spirit needed in order to entrance into the kingdom of heaven, viewed in its other aspect, that of the invisible church. The text grounds an inference of probable force, indeed, about the happiness of all infants of believers dying in infancy, and perhaps somewhat about other infants, but nothing certain.

Rom. v. 14-17 has been greatly relied upon by the advocates of the change, or rather a part of the fifteenth verse, "But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many." In this verse the stress of these advocates is laid upon the words, "Much more the grace of God . . . by . . . hath abounded unto many." It is said that if we count the abounding of grace only in the number of adult sinners saved, this statement seems not to be realized.

Certainly all Adam's children died with him, a vast number. The apostle teaches in the fourteenth verse that infants dying in infancy sinned in Adam, and therefore were subject to death; he teaches that "Adam, by reason of his unity with his posterity, is a type of Christ, who is one with his people," as Dr. Shedd puts it. "The two unities are alike in some particulars, but not all," as verses 15 to 17 show. In these verses he teaches us, as Calvin says, "there is a greater measure of grace procured by Christ than of condemnation introduced by the first man." But Calvin further remarks, "But observe that a larger number are not here contrasted with many, for he speaks not of the number of men; but as the sin of Adam has destroyed many, he draws this conclusion, that the righteousness of Christ will be no less efficacious to save many." And Shedd says that *the many* to whom the gift by grace abounds "is not of equal extent with *the many* in the first clause, because other passages teach that *the*

many who die in Adam are not coterminous with *the many* who live in Christ. Compare Matt. xxv. 46, 'And these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into everlasting life.'

The passage really teaches nothing whatever as to the relative number of the saved and of the unsaved; nothing whatever as to whether all infants dying in infancy are elect, and so saved.

Even if we do not go fully with Calvin, we cannot safely say that unless ALL *children dying in infancy* are saved, it is not true that "much more the grace of God . . . hath abounded unto *many*." Nor that unless all such children are saved, only a relatively small part of the human race is saved. Who has the right to say so? May not the cause of Christ yet triumph until Christians and their children shall constitute the great majority of the whole human race? Do we not pray in faith, "Thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven?" Are not the heathen to be given our Lord for his inheritance?

As has been seen, we make an inference from this passage as to the salvation of all infants; but it is no necessary inference. It is of only probable weight. It is not worth while to consider all the texts that have been advanced in support of the change. We have tried to look at the scriptural argument as fairly as we could; and we have reached the conclusion that in making the change the church would be tempted to speak in dogmatic terms on a subject on which God has not spoken clearly; and that he could say in the future, I have never said anywhere, either directly or in a way to ground a necessary inference, that all children dying in infancy are elect; and whether they are or not, in asserting it as something taught in my word, you have been adding to my word.

The view maintained in this paper, the view maintained by Dr. Robinson, was also maintained by Dr. Robert L. Dabney. As certain of his statements have been superficially read and his great name abused in certain quarters in connection with the discussion of the clause touching *elect infants dying in infancy*, it may be well to state here Dr. Dabney's real view in his own words. This view he states succinctly but adequately in his "The Philosophy of Dr. Bledsoe," which appeared in the *Southern Presbyterian Review*, October, 1876, and is found also in "Discussions, Vol. III., pp. 181, ff." Dr. Bledsoe had made

the charge that our Confession (Chap. X., § 3), in speaking of "elect infants dying in infancy," implied as the only antithesis "non-elect infants dying in infancy." To this charge Dr. Dabney replies: "To a mere surmise, a simple denial is a sufficient answer. We assert that the fair and natural implication is, of *elect infants who do not die in infancy*, but live to be adults." This position he argues, then restates his position, and proceeds as follows: "The natural antithesis implied is that between the elect soul that dies in infancy and the elect soul that lives to be adult, and the different modes in which the same redemption is applied to each. Does the objector say, 'Why, then, did not the Confession speak out plainly, and say whether it supposed there was any soul, not elect, which ever died in infancy?' We answer: Because on that question the Bible has not spoken clearly. Let Dr. Bledsoe show us the express place of Scripture, if he can. Herein is the admirable wisdom and modesty of the Westminster Assembly, that, however great the temptation, they would not go beyond the clear teaching of revelation. Where God is silent they lay their hands on their mouths."¹ Again he writes: "*But is it God's real purpose to permit a single dying infant thus to remain without the grace of Christ? It is on this question that the fact wholly turns, whether there are any lost infants. And of this question, we presume Dr. Bledsoe knows precisely as little and as much as we do. Neither of us hath a precise "thus saith the Lord."* We presume that the silence of God on this point of his gracious purpose is accounted for by this trait of his revelations: That they are always intensely practical; that he never turns aside to gratify mere curiosity; and so, as there are no instrumentalities for us to use in the redemption of dying infants, he has in his usual practical fashion remained silent. . . . We know that a multitude of dying infants are redeemed. To us it appears every way agreeable to the plan of redemption through grace, that as dying infants never sanctioned Adam's rebellion in overt act, so in the liberality of God they all enjoy union with the second Adam, without being required, like us adults, to sanction it by overt faith in this life. No man can prove from the Scriptures that any infant, even dying a pagan, is lost." This is exactly the position for which we contend.

¹ *Discussions*, Vol. III., p. 194.

But some one says, What shall we carry to the stricken mother? Just what God gives us. It is not to be doubted that we do best when we go as far as he gives us the warrant for going, and stop just where he stops. May it not be that one cause of the careless indifference to personal religion on the part of some parents and to presenting their children to the Lord is this very feeling that if they die young they are safe anyhow?

Let us remember, too, that the change in the creed will in no way effect the destiny of deceased infants; and unless clear warrant, and sufficient warrant, for the change from Scripture can be found, let us beware of letting down on this point, which is of a piece with the general indifference to the very word of God, and that alone, as the source of authority in religion.

May the gracious Head of the Church put into our communion the spirit of reverence for his word by which the Westminster Assembly was moved; and may the vow, made and often repeated by the members of that body, "I will maintain nothing in point of doctrine but what I believe to be most agreeable to the word of God," be graven by Almighty grace on the heart of every presbyter in our church. Amen.¹

¹ Some features in this paper will be explained by the remark that it was delivered before Roanoke Presbytery in its original form.

UNION THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY, VIRGINIA.