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The
Westminster Confession
of Faith and the Present
Task of the Church

Cleland Boyd McAfee, Ph.D., D.D.

*Cyrus H. McCormick Professor of Didactic and
Polemic Theology in McCormick
Theological Seminary, Chicago*



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It is expected of the new incumbent of a theological chair that upon the occasion of his induction into office he deliver an address in which he makes such declarations as may seem to him wise regarding his point of view in the new work. The address herewith published was prepared in accordance with that expectation and delivered at the service for my induction into the theological chair which I occupy, on April 24th, 1913.

CLELAND BOYD MCAFEE.

In this special edition of the Inaugural Address, issued for distribution by the Seminary, it is fitting that there be inserted two documents which are not included in the edition placed on the regular catalogue of the Fleming H. Revell Company, whose plates are here used. One is the strong and suggestive Inaugural Charge delivered by the President of the Board of Directors, in which the historic point of view of the Seminary and the Church it represents is so admirably stated, with a sympathy and breadth which are characteristic of the speaker. The other contains the more intimate personal words which were appropriate to the occasion, and which opened the address as delivered, whose meaning will be apparent to the sons and friends of the Seminary, to whom in particular this edition will come.

THE CHARGE TO THE NEW INCUMBENT

*Delivered by the Rev. Samuel J. Niccolls, D.D., LL.D.,
President of the Board of Directors*

Prof. McAfee:—In behalf of the Board of Directors of McCormick Theological Seminary, I wish to express to you our profound gratification in the event which has just taken place, namely, your induction into the Chair of Didactic and Polemic Theology. It was to this end that we sought you and called you from your pastorate of an important local church to a work which we believe is of the highest importance to the whole Church. The hearty endorsement of your election by the General Assembly, and the experience this Seminary has had of your teaching during the past year, assure us that we were not unwise in our choice: so we thank God in your behalf and cherish high hopes for your future labors.

In undertaking the special service assigned to me on this occasion, I do not presume to instruct you how and what to teach. If the Board had not believed you to be already qualified for your

chair, we would not have called you to it; but it is fitting that on such an occasion as this, some one, in an affectionate and brotherly spirit, should exhort and admonish you concerning the importance of the work you have undertaken, and remind you of your responsibilities and opportunities.

You are now a professor of theology. It is an old and honorable title, one that has been worthily worn by illustrious men whose names are as household words throughout the Church. But I confess I prefer the name teacher before it. A professor is one who professes to teach a particular science or art, but a teacher is one who teaches. It is one of the distinguishing titles of Jesus Christ Himself. To call Him professor would sound strangely, if not irreverently, but He has won for Himself a title of enduring honor, which all gladly accord to Him—the Great Teacher. The common title, doctor divinitatis, so often carelessly given, and to many so empty of significance, means a teacher of divinity. It is supposed to mark a man as belonging to the class of which Jesus Christ is the Head and Exemplar, and as such it should humble him and at the same time remind him of his responsibility. Teacher of theology is only the same title with a Greek coloring, and as you wear it, it becomes you to walk worthy of your high vocation. The chair which you occupy is the central one in this institution, for, according to its name and constitution, it is not a school

of languages or history or philosophy or sacred rhetoric, but of theology. The other chairs, equal in honor, are to be co-ordinated and to work in harmony with yours, for the essential matter is a sound, clear, definite scriptural theology. If you fail in giving this in your teaching, you pervert the end for which this seminary stands and frustrate the work of your co-laborers.

The teaching of theology, always a serious and laborious task, is beset with many difficulties at the present time. Fifty years ago theology was a definite science, and to most it seemed to be a finished one. No new discoveries were to be made in all its realm. Its dogmas were fixed with arithmetical precision. The course of instruction was a well-kept road, clearly defined, with its mile posts, sign boards, danger signals and directions at dubious turnings. The chief duty of the teacher was to keep his pupils in the old and well-trodden road. But a great change has taken place. Now there are beaten paths leading off into the unknown country on either side, that can hardly be distinguished from the main road. Not a few teachers seem to be anxious to blaze a new trail for themselves into the outlying wilderness. Formerly theological teaching was stereotyped and there was a fixed creed and the Scriptures were interpreted in harmony with the credal standards. There were those who received our Confession of Faith "*ipsissima verba.*" The

discoveries of science were regarded with alarm and its teachings with hostility. The Scriptures literally interpreted were accepted as supreme and infallible in all matters of history, philosophy, astronomy and geology as well as in religious truth. Theological teachers spoke with something of the accent of infallibility, and were not slow to anathematize those who failed to accept in all things the recognized standards of theology. That a great change in this respect, whether for good or ill, has taken place is plainly obvious. Growing unrest is not confined to the social, the industrial or the political world. It has entered the life of the Church and is distinctly changing its thinking. Liberty of thought, impatience of the restraints of dogma, and the enlargement of knowledge are characteristic of the times. The old formulas reverently accepted a generation ago, will not serve the thinking of the age. The new wine must be put in new bottles. A century ago theology was admittedly the queen of sciences, but her title has been challenged and to maintain it she must submit her claims to be studied in accordance with the principles of modern scientific investigation. All this means that he who would teach it wisely and with the authority of conviction, must know something of the accredited facts which increased knowledge has brought to light in all departments of human life.

The discoveries of science, or in other words a larger knowledge of God as revealed in nature,

have already modified in many ways the interpretation of Scripture, the chief source of theology, and doubtless will continue to do so in the future. The true theologian must not be a man of "One Book" in the sense that he knows none other than the Bible; but rather does he know many, that he may better understand the great Book in which God is so wonderfully revealed. God is in the world revealing Himself in manifold ways. It is a pleasing sign that so many of the responsible teachers of religion have adopted a wiser attitude toward science and culture and instead of regarding them with hostility or suspicion, welcome them as friends, searching after the truth, though it may be at times blindly and erringly. Keep an open mind, my brother to all the winds of truth that blow. We lay no bonds upon you to lock the doors and close the windows, and live in monastic seclusion that you may better interpret the thoughts of God. But I am not advising you to give heed to all the speculations and vagaries that are exploited in the name of science and philosophy. They rather keep in mind the apostolic exhortation: "Prove all things, hold fast to that which is good." You well know that the great source of Christian theology is the Word of God contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament. It is supreme, authentic, infallible in its statements. You can rely upon them just as the teacher of astronomy can rely upon the stars in investigating the heavens, or the

chemist upon the properties and combinations of matter. But the Bible does not present to us a final and infallible system of theology. Our creeds are man made. They are attempts on man's part to present in systematic form what he believes the Word of God teaches, just as the science of astronomy is the setting forth of what he has discovered in the heavens; but as the heavens are greater than astronomy, so the Holy Scriptures are more than our systems of theology. No one of them can claim to be final and inclusive of all truth. At best we know only in part, and humility becomes a teacher of polemic theology. At the same time he should be a man of clear and positive convictions concerning the truth he teaches. The teacher who speaks with the accent of uncertainty is predestined to failure. The fact that we know only in part the great things of God should not destroy the certainty of what we do know, and leave us adrift in a sea of speculation. It is your duty to search the Scriptures diligently and prayerfully, and from their testimony clearly understood form the system of truth you shall teach. That it will also be your duty, so long as you occupy your present position to teach the system of doctrine generally accepted by the Presbyterian Church is so obvious that it needs no enforcement from me. Our Church is not molluscous or agnostic in her creed. She has a definite statement of her faith, which she believes is in accord with the Scriptures, and if you cannot

consistently and conscientiously teach it, the sooner you retire from your chair, the better it will be for yourself and the Church.

Another qualification for the teacher of theology is the spirit of reverence. He is dealing with themes of surpassing greatness, such as should excite reverence and adoration. They transcend all human measurement, and human speech is too poor to give an exact definition of them. Their devout contemplation should move us to cry in adoring wonder with the apostle: "O the depths of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and his ways past finding out."

The underlying basis of a true theology is not our thoughts of God, but His thoughts toward us. We are to know Him not through our imaginings, or reasonings of what He ought to be, but through His self revelation, and this is through His thoughts and purposes, and these are exceedingly deep and high. His ways are not as our ways nor His thoughts as our thoughts. They are not to be thought out, critically examined, and made subject to our reasoning as some are disposed to do. The rather are they to be received by faith as true and right, lived out and rested upon.

Let me warn you against trying to master God's thoughts. Let Him master yours. There is too much of this rationalistic tendency in modern theology. It makes God little by bringing Him down to our level. When men come to

think that they can by searching find out God, reverence is lost. Instead of standing with unsandaled feet and holy awe before the burning bush, they trample near with brogan-shod feet, and uplifted heads, saying "we must investigate this phenomenon and rob it of its mystery."

Be a reverent teacher of the truth. Give your pupils a view of God in which there shall be something to excite wonder and worship, a mystery great and profound, that shall attract and lift up the soul in adoration. Let them know that God is greatly to be feared and to be held in reverence.

Lastly, the true theologian must be a man of deep spirituality. Paul's saying, that "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned," is just as applicable to the professor of theology as to the ordinary reader of the Word. The heart, not the intellect, is the organ by which we come to know the truth. *Pectus fecit theologum.* It is the Spirit-renewed heart, not the clear mind, that catches the first gleam of the true light that lighteth every man coming into the world. So far as the deep, vital and underlying truths of Scripture are concerned, there can be no intellectual assurance of them as long as a man is morally undecided. "It is with the heart that man believeth unto righteousness." The luminous hours of your soul when the truth in its radiant glory will be

revealed to you, will be those when you are in closest communion with God. This is to say that to be a great teacher of theology you must be pre-eminently a man of prayer. You can think the great thoughts of God, when abandoning your own, you have surrendered yourself to Him to be taught by His Spirit. "The proud He knows afar off, but the meek will He guide in judgment and the meek will He teach His way." There are statements in the Scriptures over which the intellect of the self-sufficient man stumbles, but the humble heart can recognize their meaning and find comfort and strength in them. Remember that it is not as one having surpassing intellectual knowledge, however desirable that may be, but as a spiritual man knowing the truth of God in your life, that Jesus Christ can make you a wise, safe and successful teacher of the Gospel of the grace of God. To this end, my brother, may He give you a double portion of His Spirit.

Introductory Paragraphs of the Inaugural Address as Delivered by Professor McAfee

Mr. President:—As I stand here in the presence of yourself and the Board of Directors, the President of the Seminary and my honored colleagues of the faculty, the alumni and my fellow students, with the other friends who have kindly gathered, there is much that gives to the service for me a note of solemnity. Your own gracious words of welcome and of counsel remind me of many obligations which already I owe to you, since, after my own father, no one more than yourself cheered and encouraged my early ministry, as you have always inspired its later years.

The succession into which you have inducted me is notable. Eighth in the line since the founding of the Seminary, and seventh occupant of the chair which bears the noble name of the large-hearted, keen-sighted founder both of the Chicago life of this Seminary and of a family whose service is now international, I look back over the list with something like dismay. These were versatile men, who brought large mental and spiritual powers to the task which has fallen to me. Their names have been great in the Church. Three have been Moderators of the

General Assembly. Dr. Nathan Rice's name is part of my boyhood remembrance. After leaving here he was for a time President of Westminster College, Missouri, of which my father was an alumnus, and I recall the satisfaction which men of that day had in his part in the famous debate with Alexander Campbell, published in a portly volume and revealing his wide learning and shrewd sagacity as a debater. He knew the meaning of "polemic" theology. My personal acquaintance has included only two of those whom I now succeed. The only unstarred name is that of President Patton, who permits me to claim him for a friend, and who began his professorship here at the age of twenty-nine, and through ten brilliant years gave foregleams of his large ministry as university and seminary president and Christian apologete. The greetings of the hour have already been sent to him, and his interest is with us. It is something to realize that in coming from Brooklyn to this chair, I have followed the path not only of President Patton, but also of Dr. Willis Lord, both of whom came from pastorates there.

The other predecessor whom I was honored in knowing is the one whose place I immediately take, Dr. Willis Green Craig. His memory is fresh in the minds of us all; his staunch loyalty to the faith of the saints, his unwearied concern for the spiritual power of the Church, his challenge of all weakening errors, are familiar

remembrances. He came to this chair from his teaching of history at an age when many men are counting their work at an end, and at fifty-eight set out upon what proved to be twenty years of teaching—the longest term of service which the chair has known. It was in itself a great achievement, in which the Seminary is honored.

I come to this chair, following such men, with real diffidence. I enter upon my work at an earlier age than any who have occupied it, except President Patton, and I bring to it longer pastoral experience than any one of them. Inevitably, therefore, my point of view must be my own. I will not admit unconcern for abstract truth, in theology and elsewhere. A little training in philosophy forbids such unconcern. But my largest concern is for the use which young men can make of Christian truth in dealing with men and with the need of the times. My own attitude toward it for years has necessarily been that of a pastor, and I cannot believe that any truth is of grave importance in theology which cannot be freely, gladly, rejoicingly preached. There must be some way of wording doctrine which will be as natural in the pulpit as in the study and the class room. I do not undervalue the formal and properly technical terms of theology. They are a necessary shorthand for the rapid thinking of the minister. But his truth has a work to do in this present world and time. The only Gospel given to him

is one which is to be *preached*, not simply studied, in the whole world. (Matt. 24:14.)

You will not wonder, therefore, that my first thought, when I faced the renewal of my ordination vow in subscribing again to the Westminster Standards, was of their relation to what I had come to know as the present task of the Church. There is no blinking the fact that there are men who feel that these Standards are now outgrown. Reference has been made in our times to the "fossiliferous creeds" of the past. There are some who honor and reverence the Westminster Confession, but who feel that it has served its time and is not suited to our times. Naturally, I could not be indifferent to that opinion when I was leaving the direct attack on the needs of our times, and undertaking the indirect attack which appears in the work of helping young men to form their theological convictions. So I have chosen as the theme for my inaugural address, "The Westminster Confession and the Present Task of the Church," and I invite you to make the survey with me.

The Westminster Confession of Faith and the Present Task of the Church

Two facts make the selection of this theme natural, as I enter upon the duties of the chair of theology in this institution. One is that the statutes of the Seminary require each new incumbent of its chairs to make formal written subscription to his "belief that the Confession of Faith and catechisms of the Presbyterian Church contain a summary and true exposition of the system of doctrine, order and worship taught in the Holy Scriptures," and his promise that he "will not teach, directly or indirectly, anything contrary to or inconsistent with the said confession and catechisms." To be sure, this makes little if any addition to the vow which covers any minister in the Church of this Seminary; yet the solemnity which surrounds the subscription, and the necessity laid upon the subscriber to hold himself ready to teach the whole of the system, leading other men to accept it, if he may, must force any thoughtful man to review of the whole situation. There is no blinking the fact that there are many who feel that these Standards are now outgrown. Reference has been made in our times to the "fossiliferous creeds" of the past. There are some who honor and reverence the Westminster Confession

of Faith, but who feel that it has served its time and is not suited to our times. There is also the familiar contempt of all formal creeds. A well-known minister of our day, though of another denomination, made wide publication of his dislike of credal statements by saying that he would not sign a creed he had written himself to-day, lest to-morrow he would not still believe it. The audience, largely ministers, who heard the declaration gave it at least moderate applause, as though some of them agreed to it. Let a good deal of that be discounted for various reasons, it is still impossible to avoid facing the whole question of the Confession when one enters again his subscription to it.

The other fact which turned my mind to this theme is that my point of view for twenty-five years has been distinctly pastoral. Eighth in the line of instructors in this chair, seventh since it began to bear the name of the honored founder of the Chicago life of the Seminary, and entering upon its service younger in years than any man, save one, who has occupied it, I yet come to it with longer pastoral experience than any of them. Naturally, my point of view is my own. I will not admit unconcern for abstract truth, in theology and elsewhere. A little training in philosophy forbids such unconcern. But my largest concern is for the use which young men can make of Christian truth in dealing with men and the need of the times. For years I have been necessarily dealing with the truth which

it seemed to me was needed by the place in which my work lay. I cannot believe that any truth is of grave importance in theology which cannot be freely, fully, gladly, rejoicingly preached. There must be some way of wording doctrine which will be as natural in the pulpit as in the study and the classroom. I do not undervalue the formal and properly technical terms of theology. They are a necessary shorthand for the rapid thinking of the minister. But his truth has a work to do in this present world and time. The only gospel given to him is one which is to be preached, not simply studied, in the whole world. I found myself facing the decision to leave what might be called the direct attack on the tasks of our times, and to help my younger brethren to make the attack. It would have been strange if I had not sought to survey the field again, to see if the truth which I must agree to hold was after all the truth which I had been using and which I could frankly urge them to use. There on the one side was the Confession with its system, with my vow to be consistent with it and loyal to it, a vow which the highest courts of the Church have held should be generously but none the less honestly interpreted. On the other side stood the times in which the men I was to help must live and labor. Manifestly, the men were the important factor, not the Confession apart from them. With a sense of a present, vital purpose of the living God, which they were to serve with

the truth which they received, no honest man could agree to teach them anything which he did not believe they needed to equip them for the tasks of that purpose.

Both these facts met in the theme which has been selected for this address: The Westminster Confession of Faith and the Present Task of the Church.

I.

The Westminster Standards were issued in the middle of the seventeenth century (1643-1649). The two hundred seventy years which have ensued have witnessed two interesting changes in the life of the Church. These two virtually new periods, together with that in which the Confession was formed, constitute what are in some sense the three necessary epochs of all the history of the Church. They have been repeated in various forms from the very first.

1. The first epoch, which is that of the Confession, is marked as a period of *witness* to the truth. It is the time of the statement, the declaration, the defense of the truth. Such a time is necessarily one of controversy about the truth itself, when men think sharply and deeply about it. The philosophical aspects of it are to the fore. It is in these periods that all great Confessions have appeared. Central in the most active years of the witness is the year 1650, the year of the Confession.

2. Almost midway between that time and this appeared William Carey,¹ the apostle of the modern missionary era. At about his time there developed a second epoch, which we may describe as one of the *propagation* of the truth. Having taken its form at least sufficiently, having been declared and defended, there grew a spirit which demanded its extension. That extension took two forms, of world-wide missions, and of evangelism. From the period of Carey down to our own times there has been a great extension of missions. In that same time have appeared the world's greatest evangelists. It is not suggested that witness to the truth ceased with Carey, but that the defense of the truth was made to be less philosophical and more practical. The real test of the gospel in the first period was whether it would satisfy the minds of men. In the second period the test was whether it would bear transportation and save individual men everywhere. In the first period the accent was intellectual, in the second it added the emotional element.

3. The third era, in whose early hours we find ourselves, must be described as one of the *application* of the truth. The test of the gospel is not simply whether it will satisfy the intellectual needs of men, and not simply whether it will save all kinds of men individually, but whether it will save everything that pertains to men, whether it will work everywhere and make every

¹Carey was born 1761, and sailed for India, 1793.

place the kind of place it ought to be, and make all conditions the conditions that ought to exist, whether it will work in all the ranges of life. It is the period of social service, the period of the application of the truth.

You will not suspect me of the folly of drawing any sharp lines to designate these periods, and especially you will understand that no one period has omitted the task of the others. We are simply saying that historically there have appeared three great accents, the accent on the witness of the truth, marking especially the period of the Confession (1650); on the propagation of the truth, marking the era beginning with Carey (about 1800); and on the application of the truth, marking our own period. As a matter of fact, our own period carries on with great energy the task of the period of Carey. We are aflame with missionary zeal. And yet it is interesting to see how the motive of missions, and even of evangelism, has changed. Whereas Carey's thought was the rescue of individuals, and the purpose of evangelism at the first was to win men personally, we are now insisting that missions must take into their conception the thought of social renovation; and no evangelistic effort is counted complete or entirely worthy which does not result in some social movement initiated or advanced. If a Young Men's Christian Association or a Social Settlement building is not erected, or if the saloons are not closed, or if the police department is not renovated, or

if an orphan asylum is not founded, we feel that the evangelistic meetings were in so far defective. This is represented in some fullness in the volume which presents the findings of a Commission on Christian Unity, which has been making survey of the present situation. Its report says: "America must be completely Christianized. This is to say that in education, social and industrial life, in politics, literature, art, and all our free institutions, the kingship of Jesus shall be made a genuine reality." So completely has our own period sought to make practical the accent of the earlier period.¹

This spirit is even more marked in our attitude toward the accent of the period of the Confession. There is to-day almost no interest in truth as such. "Men with settled convictions have become as rare as were free-thinkers in an earlier time."² It is only in truth as it works that men are interested. Typical of our times is the mathematician who forced himself to complete the reading of "Paradise Lost," and then asked despairingly, "After all, what does it prove?"

Look over the field. In education, you have the accent almost universally on technical fea-

¹Men and Religion Messages, IV. 24. As though to emphasize this change, while this address was being written, the papers bore news that a celebrated evangelist had called to his aid an equally celebrated "social service" worker, to conduct an eight-days' campaign in the field in which he was himself conducting the evangelistic campaign.

²Perry, Present Philosophical Tendencies, 20.

tures. In philosophy, you have the strong current of pragmatism. In religion, you have Ritschlianism, with its value-judgments, which can go so far so that a theological lecturer could say a little while ago about Christ: "Does He have the value of God for you? Then He is divine for you. But do not demand of another man that he call Him the Son of God, when He has not that value for him." That is, truth must be taken at its value as a working principle. It is not that we have come particularly to differ from the Confession of Faith, but that many men cannot feel that it matters whether it is true or not. They ask what difference it makes in practical life whether this or that interpretation of Christian theology proves valid. They are interested in truth *if* it works, and *as* it works. They are not interested in it for the mere sake of studying it and defending it.

The upshot of all this is, that the duty of the Church has not really changed so much as it has widened. We have still to do what our fathers did. We must witness to the truth. In some sense we have more to do in that line than they had. They met conviction with counter conviction. We do not meet conviction at all. The foes of the Christian faith are not settled on what is true; they are sure only that the Christian faith is not true, and they think all zeal regarding such matters is much ado about nothing. We have not lost the task of witnessing to the truth, though the method of our wit-

ness has changed. Nor have we less need to propagate the truth, to give it trial everywhere. That task challenges us more imperiously than it challenged Carey.

No, the fact is, we have both those tasks, and we add to them that of applying the truth to all the lines of life. Defective as the figure is, I venture to suggest that the three periods stand somewhat in the relation of the seasons of the year. The Confession period was that of winter weather. The tree stood out, asserting itself against all comers. The winds that blew and the storms that came found it standing, sturdy and strong, clearly outlined against the sky. It was braced against attack. As winter passed and spring and early summer came, the tree began its growth, began to expand, to send out new twigs, new branches, to leaf and blossom. We are now in the late summer and autumn, when it is bearing its fruit, the fruit by which men live and are cheered. Our own period would be impossible without the others, and our present task is not to leave undone what they did, but to do our own work with the aid of the work they have done; to take the truth which they asserted, and which they propagated, and, still asserting and propagating it, apply it to all the phases of human life.

II.

An initial question which must come is this: Are we to confront the present need with a

scheme of truth and a system of doctrine, or with a spirit of life and a principle of fellowship? Are we to call men to an agreement in belief, or to a mode of life? Are we to challenge a man's opinions about Christ, or his spirit of obedience to Him? Is the need of the hour a creed, however correct, or rather a power of life? Now, if we must choose, most of us who are trying to do the Church's task to-day will take the second half of those proposals throughout. As between a scheme of truth and a spirit of life, we choose the spirit of life. As between agreement on a creed and fellowship in service, we choose the fellowship in service. But it is the bane of much argument that it tries to force a choice between things which are so compatible that both can be taken with perfect frankness and freedom. Surely there can be no better foundation for fellowship in service than agreement on at least the elements of the truth we are seeking to apply. The fellowship will always be wider than the formal creed. But if that creed is itself vital, then the fellowship which is formed under it will be so intense as to strengthen all other and wider fellowships. Our real question is, Does the Confession contain not only the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures, but also the energizing truth for social renovation and regeneration? Is it a statement under which we can form a fellowship, through which we can develop a spirit of life which will not cut us off from our fellows, but so intensify our

loyalty to each other that we shall be more loyal to them? Can it give us such an intensity of faith, such a heartiness of zeal, that we shall have much to spare for others?

So appears the whole discussion about creeds and their necessary divisive elements. A creed seems on the very face of it to cut us off from our fellows. That is true no matter how short your creed may be. Lecky is right in saying that "each dogma is the embodiment and inadequate expression of a moral truth, and is worthless except as it is vivified by that truth."¹ But each dogma, and especially each system of doctrine, must necessarily be formed from a certain point of view, no matter how moral and vital its truth may be, and men who commit themselves to it are in that very fact drawn into a compact group, from which other men are shut out. No creed can be formed so simply that this is not true. Dr. Denney feels that the symbol of Christian unity might be expressed in such a phrase as this, to which he thinks all could agree: "I believe in God, through Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord and Savior."² That sounds very simple, almost elementary, but you need not look far to see how many unsuspected truths it is meant to contain, which do not appear on the surface. You ask its author why certain things do not appear in it, and you find they are there. The words *Lord and Savior* "safeguard every-

¹Rationalism in Europe, near the close.

²Jesus and the Gospel, 398.

thing which is vital to New Testament Christianity." "They include everything which ought to have a place in a fundamental confession of faith, and they are the only basis of communion broad enough and solid enough for all Christians to meet upon." If you ask about the Holy Spirit, Dr. Denney reminds us that the whole belief of the Christian is through the Holy Spirit, and that no one can even say "God" in the fullest Christian sense without including all we mean by the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. You ask about the Incarnation—it is in the word "only." You ask about the resurrection, and Dr. Denney says that is assumed when we confess our faith in Christ as Lord. We cannot believe except in a living person. You ask about the atonement. That is in the word *Savior*. Of course, you have the deity of Christ in it. So you have even in that one apparently simple phrase the great divisive statements. It is inevitable since it is a creed.

The same fact appears in the excellent statement framed for the First Chinese Evangelical Church of Chicago, which is a union of work heretofore done under Presbyterian, Methodist, Disciple, Baptist and Congregational auspices. The public confession, framed with the co-operation of one of my colleagues and admirable for its purpose, simply reads: "I believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and accept Him as my Savior and Guide." Now, that bristles with perfectly proper divisive expressions. We must

either agree that men shall interpret these things in very different ways, or else we must understand that they form us into groups. The real test for a creed is not whether it is divisive, since all are that, but whether it forms us in groups with our backs to our fellow-believers under another creed, or sets us in solid phalanxes of efficiency, not to fight our fellows, but to accomplish the warfare of the kingdom of Christ. Changing the figure: if our creeds are clubs with which we belabor our brother Christians, they are hurtful. If they are banners under which we take our place beside our fellows in our common attack on the world, they have their value. Creeds that divide us from each other may need modifying; creeds that divide us from the world may need strengthening.

In simple justice it ought to be said that the Westminster Confession is not in the main a divisive work. It is not chiefly devoted to controverted points. It does not put the controverted points to the fore. To be sure, it is always Protestant rather than Romanist. It is distinctly Calvinistic where the choice must be made between Calvinism and Arminianism. But the points of difference are few compared with the points of its agreement with other Christians. The differences between the Romanist and the Protestant, between the Calvinist and the Arminian, are as nothing to the differences between them all and the non-Christian. Their differences are within the Christian circle, and that

circle is farther from the world than any part of it is from any other part. The Confession of Faith fronts the world with much that is divisive, but it fronts fellow-believers with much less that is so. The thirty-five chapters of the present Confession fall into three groups:

1. Chapters which are radically controverted, aggressively combated by other believers, the belligerent elements of Calvinism. There are two such chapters, the third, on God's Eternal Decree, and the seventeenth, on The Perseverance of the Saints. Yet even these are in general agreed to by all Calvinists; and with the declaratory statement of the Assembly, the chapter on The Decree is less controverted and less troublesome.

2. Chapters controverted in part, which proceed upon an understanding of their subjects different from that accepted by other churches and believers. There are eight such chapters. The principle on which they proceed is not acceptable to great bodies of other believers. There is time only to name those chapters. They are the ones on Providence, The Fall and Its Consequences, God's Covenant with Man, Free Will, Effectual Calling, The Sacraments, Baptism, The Lord's Supper. Even here, however, in none of these chapters does the Confession stand alone. Large bodies of believers are in accord with each of them, though the lines of division differ widely. The Methodist Church could not accept the chapter on Effectual Calling, but is in warm

agreement with the chapter on Baptism. The Baptist churches would reject the teaching about baptism, but are generally with the Confession in the chapter on Effectual Calling. Except in its High Church forms, the Episcopal Church would agree with all of these eight controverted chapters.

3. Chapters virtually not controverted. There are twenty-five such chapters. There are sections to which objection is raised, phrases which are contested, but the principle on which these chapters proceed is recognized by our fellow Christians as belonging properly to our faith.

All this means that the Confession fronts the world with twenty-five of its chapters, and fronts Christian believers with only ten, finding itself in harmony with great bodies of Christian believers with reference to all of its ten controverted chapters.

III.

There are creeds for the times and creeds for the ages.¹ As the times advance or change, the former creeds pass away, but no change of the times destroys a creed that is written for the ages. A creed for our times is the excellent social declaration of our Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America. It declares the attitude of the Church toward present needs, the needs of to-day in our social life. But such a creed

¹Cunningham, *Christianity and Social Conditions*, 204.

is declared in full hope that it may be soon outgrown. When it declares that the Church should stand for "a living wage as a minimum in every industry, and for the highest wage that each industry can afford," and for "the abatement of poverty," it is only stating principles required by these times, and it expects the time to come when they will be so much matters of course that standing for them will be what standing for laws against duelling would be now. They are principles to be worked into the fibre of our industrial fabric, and there are no more arguments against them than laws forbidding duelling and polygamy had against them years ago. The Church stood for those laws then. No church is called to stand against duelling and polygamy now.² In a new age it will not need to stand for the fine social creed it has declared, because that creed will have become a matter of course. It states a temporal expression of an eternal principle. The creed of the ages seeks to express the principle itself. The creed of the times expresses its application.

It is a familiar truth, that no man knows his

²The story of Lyman Beecher's fight in a Presbytery in 1816 for a resolution against duelling makes familiar reading for anyone who has heard arguments against resolutions in behalf of social betterment. See his *Autobiography*, I. 153. In the matter of slavery, the passing of the necessity appears in such incidents as one narrated in Allen's *Phillips Brooks*, 149, and another in Findlay's *Wesley's World Parish*, 60, both incredible for to-day.

own time, nor can fully trust himself to speak for it. As Goethe makes Faust say:

“What the spirit of the times men call,
Is merely their own spirit, after all,
Wherein, distorted oft, the times are glassed.”¹

That danger appears when any man tries to estimate his own time in detail, or to judge its relative importance over against other times. Yet any man may know the broad facts of his time, and may see wherein it is different from some other era. On that basis, it is clear that we are in a period of social awakening, a fact to be rejoiced in without measure. One of our leading writers on the Christianizing of the social order suggests that this social awakening is proved by the emergence of the new social conviction in the creeds of present formation. Glancing back over the great creeds, including the Westminster Confession, he says, “If in all these stately documents there is any trace of social consciousness, or any sense that the Christian Church has the divine mission to change this sad old earth into the kingdom of God, I should be glad to have it pointed out.”² Certainly the Westminster Confession does not represent that sense with any distinctness. That is partly because when it was framed there was no such sense of obligation in the world. It had not emerged in any substantial form. It can be said, however, that the

¹Faust, First Part, ll. 229f.

²Rauschenbusch, *Christianizing the Social Order*, 21.

Confession does not conflict with the social consciousness; it simply omits it.

We must add, not as an admission, but as a palpable fact, that the Westminster Confession is not primarily a social document, but plainly individualistic. The one outstanding teaching which qualifies that is its familiar covenant phrasing. While its emphasis is on the personal relation to God, and not on the relation of men as men to each other, yet this covenant teaching makes it sympathetic with the social consciousness. Still it presents no social platform. The conditions under which it was prepared might indeed have suggested that duty, but they did not. There were certain great controversies on, some within the Church, and some within the nation. They were doctrinal and governmental, but they were not social in our present sense of the word. There were greater inequalities then than now, but they were accepted by most people as matters of course, and were not subject to such protest.

Exactly as must be said about world missions. The Confession was framed before the modern missionary era began. Only the forerunners of it were in sight. John Eliot was working among the Indians near Boston when the Assembly was sitting. Ziegenbalg, Zinzendorf, Schwartz, were born from thirty to fifty years after, and Carey went to Africa, as we were saying, more than a century after. Yet the Confession is not anti-missionary at any point. It does not hold its

doctrine of divine sovereignty so as to destroy human responsibility. It does not hold the doctrine of sovereign election so as to lessen the obligation of preaching and believing. When the time came to add the chapter on missions, it was possible to do so without conflict. We can say of the Confession, with fuller truth, what Professor Max Lohr says of the Old Testament: "The missionary thought lies altogether at the circumference, not in the center" of it.

So with the matter of the social consciousness and the application of Christian truth to social life. The Confession lays its accent on the individual. Men are considered in simply two groups, those who do receive salvation, and those who do not; those who are elect, and those who are not. Their conduct is not so much thought of as their destiny.

I need hardly point out that that individual accent is the historical one. Personal relation to God and personal destiny have actually been the great interests of the past. It does not matter now whether that has been a defect of the past, or not. It is a perfectly plain fact. Several students of Augustine have pointed out how lacking he is in any growing sense of inspiration for the welfare of humanity. It was his personal relation to God which was uppermost in his thinking, and his social ideas were confined very largely to the believing group. The essayist, A. C. Benson, says, "I was much interested, in reading St. Augustine's 'Confessions' lately, to rec-

ognize how small a part, after his conversion, any inspiration for humanity seemed to play in his mind, compared with the consciousness of his own personal relation with God. It was this which gave him his exuberant sense of joy and peace, and his impulse was rather the impulse of sharing a wonderful and beautiful secret with others than an immediate desire for their welfare, forced out of him, so to speak, by his own exaltation, rather than drawn out of him by compassion for the needs of others."¹ Probably many readers of Augustine have noted this, though the observation is a rather subtle one. Another of his readers remarks, "The lack of moral growth in Augustine, as compared with his abounding sentiment, is indeed very striking. The ecstasy removed him from mundane things." This is only another way of saying that the accent of his thinking was not social in our sense of the word.

That is true of many others. There are not a few who feel that Luther missed a great opportunity at the Reformation when he would not fully and frankly deal with the great social revolution which was imminent in Germany, and which he did as much to check as any one.² Certainly great as was Calvin's work in Geneva, his point of view was still individualistic rather than social. The individual accent is the historical accent.

¹Hill, *Religion and Modern Psychology*, 131.

²McGiffert, *Martin Luther*, 260.

Add that this individual accent is after all the fundamental one. The social accent is absolutely dependent upon it. Social conditions will change with the times, but the fundamental fact of the individual and his relation to eternal realities must always remain.¹ There will be no social conditions that will change that. When the Confession deals with the individual, and thinks to set him straight, it is right so far as it goes. It will never be possible to treat men as though they were not individuals, with individual defects, individual needs, and individual relation to God. It will, of course, always be a mistake to act as though that were all, or as though their social relations were not important, or as though they could be indifferent to the needs of other men. But it has been rightly pointed out,² that in talking about the social organism, we are in danger of misusing our biological figure; that a number of men living together, under the same or similar conditions, are no more one living unity, in the sense in which many writers use the word, than a number of locomotives collected in an engineering shop are one single locomotive, though they are gathered together, and though they are built on the same plan, and though they accomplish the same work, subject to the same conditions. Human events are the outcome of

¹Jordan, *The Song and the Soil*, 36: "The relationship of men to God, indeed of individual men to God, must always be the basis of religion, the inspiration of all high service."

²Max Nordau, *Interpretation of History*, 102.

individual human activity, the reaction of individuals upon circumstances originating in nature, and the activity of other human beings. They cannot be explained without considering individual qualities. Every mass movement,—a war, a rebellion, a crusade, a migration, a pilgrimage—is the outcome of the actions of individual men who have gotten together for that purpose, but who must always be regarded and estimated apart. That does not mean that a man may not often do more in a group than he will do individually. But it is true that no matter how fully he is estimated in the social order, he is himself, and the fundamental appeal is to him as an individual.

It does not, therefore, put the Confession out of the path of social reform to indicate that it is essentially an individualistic document. The accent it makes is the historical one, and after all the fundamental one. The most that can be said at that point is, that it does not give full weight to the social aspect of our Lord's teaching. It contains the system of truth taught in the Scriptures, but it does not contain that truth in its social aspect.

Yet the Confession must be recognized as a strongly democratic document. If it deals with individuals, it deals with them on a common plane. It puts men on an equality before God. No kings or lords have any other claim on Him than peasants or soldiers. Whoever is saved owes it to His sovereign grace. When they stand

before God, all men are alike. No man is lost or saved by his position or his standing among men. That is fundamental democracy after all. Human distinctions become purely incidental and accidental. It has been recently suggested that the Church is an institution whose strong foundations were planted in the soil of despotic government, and that in its earliest life, Christianity gave but passing heed to the outward show of things, and adjusted its communistic spirit to the conditions in which it found itself.¹ It was an unworldly faith, but it was necessarily set down in a condition little like our modern democratic life. Certainly in some of the forms of government which it has assumed, and seeks to retain, the Church merely uses the spirit in which it found itself. The Church thus becomes not a democracy, but a monarchy, a monarchy more or less benevolent. Or it becomes an oligarchy, as in the Genevan Republic. It was what someone calls "a mundane theocracy." Now, while the faith of Christ may wear any garb which it must wear, it is still true that it wears the garb of monarchy like a Saul's armor, which hampers its free movement. Essentially it is democratic. It lifts men into brotherhood, and allows no one to claim superiority to his brother. It does that not by degrading men to a low level, but by the elevating of men into the same relation to God. It sets the redeeming cross

¹Paradise, Christianity and Commerce, 58f.

down in such position in the human race that everybody is equidistant from it.

There are at least three facts about the Confession which give it democratic tone and make it available for social power. They are the age-long principles which we are set to apply to our times. The first of these facts is this: Its accent on God's rights. The foremost truth of the Confession is the concern of God for men, and His initiation of movement in their behalf. The famous seventh chapter, which treats of God's covenant with men, recognizes not more the ruin of men than the concern of God with their need. It insists upon the fact that all the movements for good began with the grace of God. Nothing that can be said about the heinousness of sin, nothing that can be said about the merits of humanity, can lessen the movements for good, because they do not issue from the human heart or the human life. They are God's work, God's movements. No man is allowed to take his cue of life from another man. He is a creature of God, a child of God. He is where he is, and he does what he does, under the full power of God. The accent is not on the love of God. The additional chapter states that more fully. The accent is on God's rights, on His proper claim that men shall act as under His eye. We do not ordinarily go to Bernard Shaw for our theological suggestions, but he makes his character Don Juan say a very true thing: "If you can show a man a piece of what he now calls God's work

to do, and what he will later on call by many new names, you can make him entirely reckless of the consequences to himself, personally." That is true. Love for man is not so mighty a motive for the doing of a great work as a sense of the right of God in human life. This right of God, which He claims equally over all men, is the supreme element in the Confession. Like all Calvinism, it sets out from the point of view of God.

The second fact which gives the Confession social power is its accent on sin and its havoc. It does not front the evils of the world without a clue to them. It knows how they came there, and it knows what will destroy them. One of the constant tendencies of social movements is to deal so closely with symptoms that they miss the reality which those symptoms express. No man can go into the world in the spirit of the Confession without feeling that at the root of all the trouble is sin, and that the visible havoc in the social order is the havoc of sin. That assertion is to be made against considerable opposition to-day. One of our Christian writers declares that "the democratic idea is founded upon the conviction that the heart of man is essentially good and responsive to the highest appeals, if set free in the sun and air of individual freedom of opportunity, and under governmental protection."¹ Certainly the early American democracy was not

¹Paradise, Christianity and Commerce, 94.

built on that idea. It had religion all through it. It rather proceeded upon the conviction that the heart of man has something essentially wrong with it, which needs the free access of that heart to God. It is not a trouble that his fellowmen can cure. He must, of course, be allowed the sun and air of individual freedom of opportunity, but he does not come to himself without some correcting influences that must issue from a higher power than himself. In his latest story, Mr. Howells says that his hero, Owen Powell, had an "inextinguishable faith in mankind as a race merely needing good treatment to be everything that its friends could wish." The hero had considerable difficulty in holding to that faith, and even with the novelist's help hardly succeeds in working it out.¹ Now, the Confession does not pretend that the heart of man needs only a chance to be all it ought to be. It needs a change instead of a chance. Horace Bushnell could not be called a believer in the Confession, but he said a sound word about that. He had larger hopes for the Unitarians than have been realized, but he said: "Unitarians, however, will need, in order to this (spiritual vivacity), to come off their moralistic, self-cultural method, cease to think of a character developed outwardly from their own centre, and

¹New Leaf Mills. This has been described as the idea of "milk and water philanthropists." An instance of it appears in Mrs. Ward's *Robert Elsmere*. The record of great philanthropic movements issuing from it is very scanty.

pass over by faith to live in God, which is only religion or Christianity. It is to be what God in Christ and God in the Spirit will make us, and what we cannot be in ourselves." Of course, that was a quiet way of suggesting that the way for Unitarians to lead orthodoxy was for them to cease to be Unitarians. I am not pretending that Bushnell held all views of the need of a change of the human heart that appear in the Confession, but there are a good many clauses like the one which closed this letter—"to be what we cannot be of ourselves."¹

After we have said our strongest word about the injustices of the social order, about the necessity for removing the cramping limitations and unfair conditions under which men work and live, it still remains that the reason those things are as they are is because men have been negligent or selfish. We would not be rid of the trouble if we changed all these conditions. Part of the reason for dirty streets doubtless is, that there is no place to put the dirt, and that advancing civilization simply makes more dirt; but part of the reason is, that so many people are dirty. It will help clear the streets to put waste boxes on the corners, but it will not solve the problem until there is put into some people a love for cleanliness which they have not now. That same thing applies widely and touches

¹Munger, Horace Bushnell, 138. Of course there is the great chapter in Nature and the Supernatural on No Remedy in Development or Self-Reformation,

every one of our social evils. A new spirit is needed because the real trouble is the trouble of sin. In a late book on philosophy the striking expression is used, "If your religious ideas and equipment are powerless, they are false. Whatever doctrine tends to draw the fangs of reality and to leave men unstrung, content, complacent, and at ease, that doctrine is a treachery and a deceit."¹ Well, the Confession can never be accused of giving us that kind of a doctrine. It takes away the last complacency we have, the last contentment we have regarding ourselves, and forces us to see that the social order needs supremely a new, inspiring power to come into it. Sin has levelled us all down and put us all into the same attitude of dependence upon God's grace, and all our levelling up is by that grace.

The third fact in the Confession which gives it social power is its accent on the assured success of the movement for redemption. There is a strong note of assurance running through it, not simply with reference to the individual believer, though that is most conspicuous, but with reference to the final and complete victory of God's total plan. One feels that the plan outlined in the Confession is not so broad as that of the Scripture, and of this we shall speak presently. But whatever the plan is, it is to work out to complete success. No evil of men can stop it, and no failure of men can destroy it.

¹Hocking, *Meaning of God in Human Experience*, page xiv.

The tone of the Confession is very different from that of Plato in his Republic. He also looks toward an ideal which he can describe, and which is very tempting in most of its details, but he closes the ninth book with Glaucon saying: "You speak of that city of which we are the founders and which exists in idea only; for I do not think there is such an one anywhere on earth." Socrates replies: "In heaven there is laid up a pattern of such a city, and he who desires may behold this, and beholding govern himself accordingly. But whether there really is or ever will be such an one is of no importance to him; for he will act according to the laws of that city and under no other." Glaucon answers, "True, he will." Now, no one could miss the heroism of that. Whether the cause succeed or not, the man will act as though it were going to succeed. Whether any such city ever exist or not, he will work towards it. Fine as it is, however, it misses the note of assurance of the entire Christian revelation. The city which John saw is a city which comes down out of heaven into the earth. Abraham looked for a city which hath foundations, foundations not in the air but under it, whose builder and maker is God. It is commonly said that Tennyson's "In Memoriam" came with supreme corrective power into the life of thoughtful young men of English universities, checked their skepticism and agnosticism, and turned them back again to faith and service. The striking lines which had great

weight in England are those with which the poem closes. He has spoken again of "that friend of mine who lives in God." Then came the closing four lines, which give the outlook of the whole poem:

"That God which ever lives and loves,
One God, one law, one element,
And one far off divine event
To which the whole creation moves."

What the young life of England needed was an assurance of that far off divine event, and that the creation is moving towards it. You catch that note constantly in the Confession. If the movement for a true and wide democracy is of God, then it is already assured, and the task of every man is to take his place among the forces of God that bring it to pass.

These three facts in the Confession, its accent on God's rights, its accent on sin and its havoc as the fundamental evil of all times, its accent on the assured success of the movement for redemption, furnish a foundation for a movement for wide social service. Let us not mistake the point. The Westminster Assembly was not consciously democratic in our sense of the word. Its members had no such sense of social obligation as we have. The point just now is, that without their fully realizing it, they did catch notes in the Scripture teaching which help us in the sounding of our fuller chord of social service.

IV.

1. An outstanding change from the times of the Westminster Assembly to our own is in our belief regarding the Church. We believe it is gathered out of the world, *ecclesia*, a group called forth. We cannot believe more fully than our fathers that it is "one under Christ the head thereof," and that it consists of all those throughout the world who profess the true religion, together with their children. We believe still that unto this catholic, visible church, Christ hath given the ministry, oracles and ordinances of God for the gathering and perfecting of the saints in this life to the end of the world. We continue to realize that this catholic church has been sometimes more and sometimes less visible, as a visible church sometimes pure, sometimes corrupt. That is, we hold all that they declared, but they do not declare all that we count fundamental. The Church is here thought of altogether in terms of its own members, in terms of the elect who are to be taken out of the world. The world is thought of as a place for their culture and growth in grace. The venerable Professor Emeritus of this Seminary, Dr. Herrick Johnson, said a good many years ago, "Across the Westminster Confession could justly be written 'the gospel for the elect only.' That Confession was written under the absolute dominion of one idea, the doctrine of predestination. It does not contain one of three truths: God's love

for a lost world, Christ's passion for a lost world, the gospel universal for a lost world.'¹ Like all strong expressions, that leaves one a little dissatisfied because it does not credit the Confession with certain inferences which are possible. However, it is broadly true. The Church is thought of as consisting of those who are saved out of the world, while the world itself is not in consideration except as a place for their culture and growth in grace. Even the new chapter, which declares the love of God for all the world, and the consequent duty of missions, does not express the conviction which the Church holds, that it is left in the world not merely for its own sake, not merely for the elect's sake, but for the world's sake. We have to bring about the reign of righteousness. Nowhere in the proof texts of the Confession is the phrase used, "Ye are the light of the world," nor, "Ye are the salt of the earth." They are not used because there is no occasion to use them. Nowhere does that phase of the Church's life appear in the Confession. Yet the fact is, that the Church is almost the only organization which exists not chiefly for its members, but primarily for service, to bring its life to bear upon the evils that are outside of itself for their correction. It is with thought of that form of religion that Professor Beard, the Bampton lecturer of 1883, was speaking, when he said of the period which produced the Con-

¹Quoted in Strong, *Systematic Theology*, 779.

fession: "I know no epoch of Christianity to which I could more confidently point as illustrative of the fact that where there is most theology there is often least religion." That phraseology is unfortunate, but the fact that Professor Beard could describe the period in such terms shows how the concept of religion has changed in the years.

Perhaps we can gather up the difference between that period and this in noting how fully the kingdom idea has taken hold upon us. "It took a long time for the idea of the kingdom of God to win a recognized place in Protestant theology, and still longer for it to become a religious power." There are only three references to the kingdom in the Confession. None of these covers fully what is in the mind of the Christian of to-day when he speaks of the kingdom of God, not even the use of the phrase which occurs in the new thirty-fifth chapter. In the twenty-fifth chapter it is said that "the visible church" "is the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ," the thirtieth chapter says that to the officers of the Church "the keys of the kingdom of heaven are committed," the new thirty-fifth chapter says that "all believers are under obligation" to sustain the Church, and by prayers, gifts and personal efforts to contribute "to the extension of the kingdom of Christ throughout the whole earth." To all these expressions the Church agrees heartily, but its kingdom conception is not fully expressed in any of them. In the thir-

teenth article of the Brief Statement of the Reformed Faith, we come nearer the belief of the Church in the saying that, "only through this harmony with the will of God shall be fulfilled that brotherhood of man wherein the kingdom of God is to be made manifest." The relation between the kingdom and the Church has nowhere been fully worked out, though much has been written about it, but certainly the kingdom idea in the Scripture is larger than the idea of the Church, and the kingdom idea is the dominant one in Scripture.¹ The Church is a body of believers called out, set aside; the kingdom is the rule of Christ exercised over a realm. Men are called out from the world to be the Church; they are sent back in the power of that call to advance the kingdom in the world. The Church is the means; the kingdom is the end. The Church is the great thing to-day because the kingdom is to be the great thing hereafter. We pray "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven," and we seek to bring that kingdom by extending the rule of Christ everywhere. Many have the benefit of the kingdom who are not of the Church, and ultimately, doubtless, the Church will become the kingdom.

Now, it is eminently important in present day thinking that we magnify the responsibility of the Church for the kingdom, for extending the rule of Christ widely. Count Okuma recently

¹McAfee, *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount*, *passim*.

said about Japan, "Although Christianity has enrolled less than 200,000 believers, yet the indirect influence of Christianity has poured into every realm of Japanese life." He adds that this influence appears in the ideals which are becoming common among the people. No one can put his finger exactly on what has happened, but the reign of Christ is being extended far more widely than the number who bear His name would indicate. It is with exactly that hope that the Church sets out on its program of social reform. It does not minimize for an instant its primary obligation to lay hold upon the men who will accept the redeeming grace of God in Christ. That is primary. Itself consisting of called out men, it seeks to call out more men. But it believes that it has the cure for all the evils of life, a cure that can be put into operation through redeemed men. It does not stop with calling these men out from the world; it sends them back into presence of the world, and as they go back and extend the rule of Christ in the world, they are advancing His kingdom. That is the philosophy of Christian social service,—a redeemed man redeeming social conditions.

Now, the Confession does not accent, does not even mention that phase of our Christian service. It thinks of the Church in terms of its members. Certainly that is by all odds the most important phase, since it is the distinctly eternal phase. Whatever changes we make in social conditions

are fundamentally temporal changes, however much they bear upon eternal results. And as has just been pointed out, the truths upon which the Confession insists are those which are most easily and naturally applied to social service. But the present work of the Church is to take those truths and show their social value and power, surpassing without denying the teaching of the Confession.

2. A second great change from the days of the Confession to our own is in the Church's thought of God. The attitude of those days was largely legal. Men are sinners against the holy law of a just God. In infinite mercy and grace, He has provided ransom, redemption, pardon for them. They receive it at His hand as His chosen ones. With the chosen and the non-chosen, He does as He will with sovereign right, and moved by reasons which may not be questioned. The Church of to-day has not lost that conception. It is true. Sin *is* violation of law, and the holiness of God *is* outraged in it. God *is* Sovereign, He *is* King, He *is* Ruler. The cross, the atonement, does issue from His august holiness, and is necessitated by His reaction against human sin. But the Church does not stop there in its conception of God. It sees Him as a Father also. It sees sin as an outrage against love. It sees the atonement as a gift of love and a yearning heart. It hears the voice of grief and pity calling all through the night of sin and shame, calling wandering ones to come to the Father again, and the

voice it hears is the Father's voice. That conception is very dimly presented in the Confession. The idea does not conflict with its contents. It easily connects with such great phrases as those used in the chapter on God and the Holy Trinity: "Most loving, gracious, merciful, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin," and others like them in other chapters. There is also a beautiful chapter on Adoption, in which the great figure of the family is used regarding the elect, who are given the Spirit of adoption, whereby they cry, "Abba Father." That is, however, the only place in the Confession where God is called Father, except in the trinitarian sense: and the chapter itself did not seem to the great Dr. Hodge so essential a part of the Confession that he thought it necessary to devote any intention to it in his Systematic Theology, which follows the lines of the Confession. Then, also, it is true that in the fifth chapter the elect are called God's "own children." In the eighteenth chapter the reference to the Spirit of adoption occurs again, and in the twentieth chapter the people of God are called to approach Him with "childlike love." These are the only references which even suggest God's Fatherly relations, and they give a hint of a great truth which the Church has magnified into a primary belief about God. There is no word to-day which means so much to the Church when it thinks of

God as the word "Father." It goes beyond the meaning of the Confession. It does not confine His true and loving Fatherhood to His relations to the elect. It gathers up His Creatorhood, His Lordship, His Sovereignty, His Headship into the great word "Father." That He does call His faithful ones into a closer family group than the others, that He does give them the spirit of adoption, so that they call Him Father, as the world can not, is true. The Confession says that and it is right. But there is more to say. God loves all men as a Father, and their wandering and rebellion is not simply the violation of law, it is the outrage of love. The Church believes that Christ taught it that faith of God. Only on that ground does it feel it has the right to say, as the new thirty-fifth chapter says, "In the gospel God declares His love for the world and His desire that all men should be saved." If that is true, and the Church believes it without question, then God must hold much more than a legal relation to the whole world, a relation which we express clumsily, but as best we can, in the word, "Father."

Moreover these recent times, with their great enlargement of knowledge about men, with their revelations of the essential unity of the race, have made the words mean more to us, that God has nowhere left Himself without witness. He has treated no race and no man as though He did not care. He has been calling all the while.

That is why we go everywhere. God cares about all men everywhere. He is doing for all men, and wants us to be concerned for all men. The Church has been true in all these later years to that larger faith. Scientists have despaired of some races. Anthropologists have sneered at some peoples. But the Church has declared the Father's love for men everywhere, and gone with that message without a tremor, and with no fear of running beyond His love.

In doing this it has not repudiated the teaching of its Confession. It has not declared it untrue to revelation. It has still held that it does contain the system of doctrine contained in the Holy Scriptures. But at this point again it has surpassed the Confession. It has gathered up its great truth in a larger and richer one. It has seen a new light on the system of doctrine taught in the Scriptures.

That is the phrase upon which I insist, the Church has surpassed, not repudiated, the Confession. The Confession is most honored in that fact. It lays no hand of bondage on the Church, it sets no limits, it pronounces no anathema upon men who see beyond its horizon. The Westminster Fathers would rejoice with us in these two great noble advances of our thinking. It is to the honor of the Confession that on it has grown a Church, which, taking it for a platform, is elevated by it to a wider vision than its makers had. The world mission of the Church, in which

the kingdom idea grows rich and full; the love of God, the Triune God, as a Father over His children; these are the great new visions of the truth which the Church holds, while it still holds the Westminster Confession. Men can hold the Fatherhood of God cheaply, counting Him simply good-natured, and lose the very fibre of clear thinking in their view. They can lose sight of His holiness in the assurance of His love. But the Church does not hold that Fatherhood cheaply. It bows before Him as a Holy Father, but as not the less a Father.¹

V.

On this foundation, then, our Church stands. It has a great Confession, presenting the truth which now it is its task to apply. It finds that truth presented in terms of the ages. It must convert it into terms of the times. It finds that truth individualistic, and helpfully so, since any Church would pass into immediate weakness if in the doing of its social task it lost the sense of the individual and His relation to God. The Confession presents to the Church a God before whom it bows in humble reverence, and it permits the Church to be true to it and yet call Him,

¹President Woodrow Wilson, in "World's Work," April, 1913, makes the profound observation that "benevolence never developed a man or a nation. We do not want a benevolent government. We want a free and a just government." This axiom may be pondered by those whose thought of the Fatherhood of God is that of good nature and uncaring tolerance.

Father. It bids the Church look out on the world as a scene of spiritual peril, reminding the Church that it is called out from the world, elect, chosen of God. And it permits the Church to take not that view alone, but to see the world as the field of its opportunity, to hear the call of God which takes it back to the world with a gospel of renovation and redemption. It teaches the Church to think of itself in terms of its members, but it permits the Church to think of its members in terms of the world. The Confession does not count itself a perfect document. He will be most loyal to it who insists that it is a platform on which one rises to take wide views.

In the days of the Scotch disruption and reunion, Principal Rainy, leader of the main body of the Church, had one heavy argument which he persistently used. Generally he phrased it in one profound saying, "The Church has a Master, and that Master is living." That is argument good for all times and occasions. The Master of the Church is living. The Church must keep itself free always to follow Him wherever He goes. It must be free to go into the valleys with Him, to climb any mountain top, to take any view. Its mission in the world is to be a light, as He is a light in the world. Its purpose will never be surpassed because He cannot be surpassed. The Christian faith is the final faith, not because we finally understand it, but because there can be no revelation beyond the revelation

of the Incarnate Son of God. But there can be an increasing unfolding of that revelation, and the living Church of the living Christ will always find the new truth available for all its new tasks. It will be always the old truth too, but always that old truth gathered up into larger and richer understandings, by which it is possible for one to be loyal to the old and eager for the new.¹

In this faith, which is the heritage of my ancestry, especially of an honored father, whose life passed without narrowness through period of great change, whose heart kept steady beat to the rhythm of the old and the march of the new, in this faith I set out to teach Christian Theology. It will be the theology of the Holy Scriptures. It is the system of doctrine contained in the Westminster Standards. It is that system glorified by the new challenge for these times which Christ and the Holy Spirit present to the Church in the name of the Father.

¹I have attempted to state the whole matter of this paragraph with greater fullness in an address delivered at the opening of the Seminary year, September, 1913, and published under the title, "The Old and the New in Theology."

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McAfee, Cleland Boyd, 1866-

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