

## REVISION OR REAFFIRMATION?

Professor Warfield has sent to the Stated Clerk of the General Assembly the following letter, declining to serve on the Committee of Revision appointed by the last Assembly :

PRINCETON, N. J., June 25, 1900.

*To the Rev. Dr. William Henry Roberts, D. D., LL. D.,*

*Stated Clerk of the General Assembly.*

MY DEAR DR. ROBERTS :

The intimation you have sent me of my appointment on the committee, authorized by the last General Assembly, "to consider the whole matter of the restatement of the doctrines most surely believed among us," reached me duly. I am deeply sensible of the honor of such an appointment, and as well of the duty of the servants of the Church to address themselves diligently to the tasks assigned to them by its highest court. Nevertheless, I am constrained to ask to be relieved from this service. There are circumstances arising from illness in my family, and others arising from losses sustained lately in the teaching force of the Seminary in whose immediate service I am employed, which would require me to hesitate to undertake additional labors at this time. But I should not be true to myself did I not say frankly that the decisive reason moving me to request release from service on

this committee is an unconquerable unwillingness to be connected with the present agitation for a revision of our creedal formulæ in any other manner than that of respectful but earnest protest.

I cannot think that the violent assault upon certain of our confessional statements—statements which are clearly Scriptural and as clearly lie at the centre of our doctrinal system—in which the agitation originated, was a fitting occasion for a movement of this kind, or for any action of the Church except the rebuke of the assailants by the courts to which they were directly amenable. I cannot think the precipitate action of a few presbyteries following these assaults with a request for some review of our confessional position other than unwise. I cannot believe that the Assembly acted with that regard for the peace of the Church and the integrity of its testimony to the truth which is becoming in our highest court, when it paid such heed to these few discordant and, as I must believe, ill considered overtures that it ignored the eloquent silence of five sixths of the Presbyteries of the Church and precipitated an agitation as to its doctrinal standards upon the whole Church. My conviction is clear that, in the circumstances, it was rather the duty of the Assembly, in fulfillment of its high function of guardian of the truth professed by this Church, to reaffirm the doctrines that had been assailed; to quiet the disturbance that had been raised; and, by renewed hearty commendation of our Standards to the churches under its care, to strengthen in them a firm and intelligent attachment to these Standards and their forms of sound words. It is greatly to be feared that the effect of its contrary action, by which on so small an occasion it has invited every Presbytery to subject the fundamental law of the Church to searching inquisition,

will be to foment carping criticism and discontent, if it be not taken in some quarters as a license to unrebuked assaults upon the very bond by which our churches are held together, and on the very substance of the truth delivered into our keeping by the great Head of the Church. It is my hope and prayer that the Presbyteries may be led by the Divine grace to avert these dangers and to repair the evil already done, by entering an effective protest against this whole movement through a reaffirmation of their hearty loyalty to the system of doctrine brought to such admirable expression in our Standards.

In my own person at least I feel constrained to make this protest and reaffirmation with the utmost emphasis, and I am unwilling to enter into any relations which may seem to any to lessen this emphasis in any degree. I am thoroughly out of sympathy with the whole movement of which the work of this committee is a part. I desire above all things to see the Church pass quietly away from this disturbing agitation concerning its fundamental beliefs, which form the basis of its unity. It is an inexpressible grief to me to see it spending its energies in a vain attempt to lower its testimony to suit the ever-changing sentiment of the world about it. I would fain see it, rather, secure in the peaceful possession of its well-assured doctrinal system, and animated by an enthusiastic loyalty to it and to the Standards in which it is expressed with such singular clarity and power, go forth in strength to win the world to the evangelical truth it has drawn from the Scriptures and professed through so many years of struggle and suffering, of progress and triumph. That God may bless the Church through these coming months with a double portion of the knowledge of His truth and of wisdom from on high, and with a double portion of holy courage to believe in



its heart and to reassert in the face of whatever unbelief or doubt the whole truth that He has delivered to its keeping, is my constant and fervent prayer.

Will you kindly, my dear Dr. Roberts, communicate to the Moderator of the Assembly this my request to be released from service upon the committee, and make my excuses in whatever manner may be proper.

I am very truly yours,

BENJAMIN B. WARFIELD.