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The New Creed Agitation.

Issue upon issue is forcing itself upon our Church. No sooner is one important question in process of solution than another arises. A few months ago it was all McGiffertism. Upon the close of this, came the renewal of the old agitation about revising our Confession of Faith. Added to this is the demand for a new creed.

Our new creedists, however, are very much divided in opinion as to what they want. With some, it is anything to get rid of the Westminster Confession of Faith, and with others, it is a move for a less pronounced theology. Some call for a brief compendium of doctrine for special use in the reception of church members, and others for a document that will do for ministers and elders in their official relations. Some desire an up-to-date affair, and others an irenic product that will hurt nobody. Some want a creed long enough for doing justice to our Standards, but couched in modern language, and others one as short as it can be made, or boiled down to a minimum. Some would have it distinctively Calvinistic, and others merely evangelical. Some demand that it shall be in the phraseology of the day, and others that it shall be in Scriptural terms. Some wish it to be supplemental to the old Confession, and others as a substitute for it.

This variety of purpose and sentiment is indicative of weakness in the movement and does not auger well for its success. Unity of design and plan is necessary to a revolutionary or reformatory undertaking. Divided counsel creates divided action. If our General Assembly should listen to this call for the formulation of a new creed, it is hardly likely that any committee having it in charge could evolve anything that would suit so mixed or varied a constituency. When subjected to newspaper criticism and discussion, and when probed by both conservatives and liberals in our respective Presbyteries, it would hardly stand the test. It would be torn to pieces by different critics. It might find favor in some quarters, but would not in others. It is exceedingly doubtful if it would command any more hearty and general agreement than the document which has so long expressed the belief of our Church. Why, then, trouble our Assembly or our Presbyteries with the subject?

Or if it is to be considered, it is only right and fair that those who desire action upon it should be agreed as to what they want. If the metes and bounds of a new creed were clearly defined, the Church might have some intelligent and practical basis for its consideration. But at present all is in such an inchoate state, and the overtures upon the subject are so confusing and conflicting, that special caution is necessary in regard to the undertaking. Our Assembly would run a fearful risk in launching out upon the uncertain sea that seems to spread before us.

In view of existing complications and past controversies, the present doctrinal agitation, whether for a new creed or a revision of the old Confession, does not seem either wise or necessary. We fear no good will come of it. We are more and more satisfied, from a general sur-

vey of the field, that the Presbyterian Church needs rest from disturbing questions of this kind for the next decade. But if they are to be pushed, many will console themselves with the reflection that in the conflict between a new creed and Confessional revision, the one will likely kill off the other, and neither prevail, while others will fear the loss of Church life and power during their settlement. All interference in this way with practical and aggressive ecclesiastical work is to be deplored.

Whatever may be one's view about the wisdom and expediency of the present doctrinal commotions, it becomes all lovers of the great Presbyterian Church to seek God's special grace and direction upon our approaching Assembly, that all the various problems coming before it may be met and settled in the wisest and safest way, for the glory of God and the interests of his Kingdom. He overrules and controls, and never fails in the trying hour when his guidance and help are earnestly and faithfully sought.

The "Interior's" Fancy Picture.

Our highly imaginative and reckless contemporary, the "Interior," rather excelled itself in inventiveness when it palmed the following upon its readers: "The Presbyterian" quotes and calls special attention to an article from the New York 'Sun,' written by a notorious Jesuit, speaks of the 'masterly ability' of the article, and says that Presbyterians would do well to read it! 'The Presbyterian,' however was careful to strike an eulogy to the Pope out of that article. This is hard on the Westminster divines and on the Confession of Faith—this calling upon the 'man of sin and son of perdition,' and the scarlet woman sitting on the seven-headed beast with a golden cup in her hand—to teach theology to Presbyterians! It is enough to send a shudder of wrath and a cry of pain echoing through 'Jerusalem Chamber.'"

The animus of this screed is clear. The intention is to break down the force of the "Sun's" article and to excite prejudice against "The Presbyterian." It recognizes a pertinency in what was said, and takes this way to minimize it. Our contemporary is careful, however, not to print it for the benefit of its readers. They would have found it worth reading. Who wrote the article in question, we know not. It represented the editorial opinion of a leading New York daily upon an important subject. Different outside opinions prevail as to the ecclesiastical proclivities of the writer upon its staff who so trenchantly, from time to time, treats of modern-day religious movements. He has hit liberalism and Briggsism so hard at times that it is the fashion in certain quarters to speak of him as a "Jesuit," but he has been represented to us, by those who profess to know something about him, as a retired Baptist minister. But it matters little who he is, if he is able to discern rightly the religious drift of the hour, or a particular phase or trend of it in or out of a denomination. No unprejudiced Presbyterian objects to reading the opinions of one outside the pale of his own eccles-

The Old or a Revised Confession.

By Rev. Maitland Alexander, D. D.

We give the following abstract of a recent sermon by Dr. Alexander, pastor of the First church of Pittsburgh, Pa., upon the above topic:

The Presbyterian Church in its Confession has taken a firm stand upon the rock of an infallible Bible, and although the conflict regarding this position has been sharp and some outposts are in the possession of the enemy, the Church without uncertainty has affirmed and reaffirmed its belief in the Holy Scriptures as the only infallible rule of faith and practice. The creed of the Church is based on the Holy Scriptures and the Presbyterian Church exists because it adheres to this infallible rule of truth.

The layman is free to accept or not the abstract teachings of the Westminster Confession, provided he has confessed his sins and is seeking pardon and holiness at the foot of the Cross. Having schools where the theology of the Westminster Confession is taught, it exacts from its ministers a vow binding them to believe its doctrines. The liberty of the individual believer is respected, because the layman has only to profess faith in Christ and obedience to him, and also because no man is compelled to become a Presbyterian minister. It is assumed, however, that no one will become a Presbyterian minister without convictions, and there is surely no hardship and no duress in requiring men, first, to take an ordination vow, and, secondly, to be loyal and faithful to that vow.

When, therefore, we hear ordained ministers clamoring for freedom to believe and to teach that which contradicts the confession to which they have subscribed, we ask wherein their liberty is restrained. If they believe in Methodist theology, why should their fondness for a Presbyterian pastorate or professorship make them cry out for liberty? There are no more shallow pretenses than the plaintive appeals for liberty made by men who wish to break the law. Who would dare to affirm that I must adhere to Presbytery in order to be a Christian? Yet there are doctrines far more vital and permanent and fundamental than those of external ecclesiastical form, doctrines which are denied with assurance and disloyalty. These are attacked and ridiculed by the men who are clamoring for a revision of our Confessional Standard.

The change is defended upon the grounds of expediency. We are told that men are kept out of the Presbyterian Church on account of its harsh and repulsive creed, and that a call for the change comes from the laity, although no layman is obliged to subscribe to the Westminster Confession. We are told that many are kept out of the Church because they do not understand or because they misinterpret its doctrines. This misunderstanding, this misinterpretation, is not new.

Our Church had its origin in the midst of fiercest discussion, warfare and martyrdom. Except in recent years, the Presbyterian Church has never been called upon to change its creed because its creed was disliked by hostile observers. We do not deny the great Catholic doctrines of the Trinity, the Incarnation or the Atonement because they meet with opposition on the part of Unitarians, Socinians or Agnostics. Doubtless these doctrines keep many men from joining our communion. It may be ex-

pedient to change the creed if we are seeking only numerical strength, but I am ready to suppose that expediency is the only ground upon which this revolutionary action is proposed.

Those demanding a change in our standards may be divided into two classes, those who wish simply to revise the standard and those who wish to set the standard aside and adopt a shorter creed. The attempt of the former ended in failure a few years ago, as wherever they sought to improve the language of the Confession they impaired its logic, and the Church declined the grotesque mingling of the Arminian and Calvinistic. The chief grounds for the revision were outspoken expressions of the Presbyterian doctrine of predestination and election.

The doctrine of predestination is an essential and logical result of belief in Almighty God. To deny it is to deny that God is the Governor and Lord of the universe which he has created. Denial is practically a logical road to atheism. What estimate would you make of God's character if you believe that he launched this human race to seek and find its own salvation of its own free will? Some may urge the ancient and stereotyped objection that man's efforts are useless and encourage immorality. The man who has the doctrine of election presented to him is not deterred by it from becoming a Christian.

No one can put forth, as an excuse that God is not a God of mercy. The proof of God's divine mercy is the sacrifice of himself. The charge is often brought that the Westminster Confession teaches the damnation of infants. When the Westminster divines asserted that elect infants are saved they did not assert that any infants are not elect. Similar ignorance is manifested by those who criticise the Confession because it does not set forth sufficiently the love of God. This objection has always seemed to me quite absurd, particularly if it is urged by those who have an adequate idea of the majesty of God.

The movement in progress to revise our standard of faith is not in the interest of a superior scholarship. The scholars of the world, even those who do not believe that the Bible is true, have no doubt about what the Bible teaches. It is possible this theological revision may be successful. Two-thirds of the Presbyteries have the power, if they so desire, to lower the old flag and rob our Church of its distinctive attributes.

To Revise or Not to Revise.

By Rev. A. W. Pitzer.

If the Standards of the Presbyterian Church are to be revised, the work should be done by the friends, not the foes, of the Confession of Faith; by Calvinists, not by Arminians; by Presbyterians, not by Congregationalists; by such men as Drs. Patton, McKibben, and Craig, not by Drs. Hillis, McGiffert and Parkhurst.

The movement should originate within, not without, the Presbyterian Church; and be conducted by the men who accept the "Standards" as containing the "system" of truth taught in the Standards, not by the men who have denounced that "system of doctrine."

Revision should be made in order to conform the Confession more completely to the Word of God, not at the behests of down-grade theologians and the frantic howling of the secular press generally.

A Few Facts to be Remembered.

1. The Confession is man's work, not God's.
2. If the men of 1643 had the right to express their beliefs in a creed, the men of 1900 have the same right.
3. No church member is required to subscribe to the Confession.
4. Church officers subscribe not to each one of the 2500 propositions in the Confession, but to the system of doctrine contained therein.
5. No minister is required to remain in the Presbyterian Church one moment longer than he wishes to stay.
6. The "Standards" were prepared in 1643, by an Assembly of Divines called to meet, by order of the Long Parliament. They were charged: (a) to establish uniformity of religion in the three kingdoms; (b) to extirpate Popery, Prelacy and Schism; (c) to preserve the liberties of the kingdom, and the person and authority of his Majesty.

If an Assembly of our day should undertake to revise the old creed, or to make a new one, it is safe to say that this work would not be done in the lines laid down by the Long Parliament for the guidance of the Westminster Divines.

The creeds of Christendom are growths, not manufactures. They have come into being from the needs of the Church, rather than from the will of man; they give form and body to the beliefs of Christians of different generations; they constitute the multiplication table of scientific theology. When first formulated, or when revised, the question that should be decisive of the nature of the creed is: "What use is to be made of it?"

Is it intended to define and limit ministerial brotherhood? Is it intended for the use of scholars, or for the general membership of our churches? Is it for one denomination, or for all believers? Do we wish it to exclude certain classes of Christian belief, or to include the largest possible number of avowed believers? Is it intended for the training of our candidates for the ministry, or for the people in their homes?

The objections to the "Confession" are few, and revision could be had by the process of elimination; as was done not many years ago by "striking out" the un-Scriptural prohibitions in the matter of marriage.

Revision by Striking Out.

1. Shall these words ". . . or make of nothing . . . in the space of six days," be stricken from Chapter IV. on Creation, Section 1?
2. Shall Sections 3 and 4 of Chapter III. of God's Eternal Decrees be stricken out?
3. Shall Section 7 of same chapter be stricken out?
4. Shall the word "elect" be stricken from Chapter X., Section 3?
6. Shall Chapter XXV., Section 6, be amended by striking out all after the words, "Lord Jesus Christ?"

These eliminations do not touch the essence or integrity of the "system," but bring it into more perfect harmony with the statements of the Scriptures; and relieves the Confession from needless odium.

These revisions should be made by the avowed and steadfast friends of the "system." Let the friends of the Confession rally to its defense, as a "system," and say to the outside world, "We do not ask your assistance or co-operation in the work of revising the Presbyterian Stand-

ards. We ourselves, without your aid, will do the revising."

Away With the Bible, Away With Calvinism.

By Rev. J. Malcolm Smith.

It is not surprising that the proclamation has gone forth that belief in Calvinism must go, or rather is gone, with the passing of belief in the Divine authorship of the Bible. For Calvinism is the theology of the Bible. It is true that many in heart fully believe the Bible to be the Word of God, and love and revere it as such, who think Calvinism must not be found in its teaching. The Bible may be as precious to Arminians as to Calvinists. But when they are brought to a close contending for their position they have to undeify God by limiting his foreknowledge. God cannot know what things are going to be unless it is eternally settled that they shall be. But Arminians can love God fervently if they cannot yet trust him with the making of the destinies of his creatures. That the Bible says he does not make their destinies is certain. It does not say that he takes the determination of what those destinies shall be out of their own hands. If any being is wicked, and goes to the woe that awaits the wicked, it is because he prefers his wickedness to righteousness; not because he is compelled to, but because he so chooses. The Scribes and Pharisees were doomed to reject and crucify Christ when he was "slain from the foundation of the world," but we have only to read what Christ said to them when they were working out their hate, to know they were their own destroyers.

We must fully trust the God the Bible reveals if we are going to be able to be satisfied with all its teachings. Else we will wonder whether he does not show arbitrary partiality in electing some and not all to faith and everlasting life in Christ. If we cannot fully trust the love the Bible says God is, we cannot say, "Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight." But what is good in God's sight is not likely to be good in the sight of men that judge God "by feeble sense." And the repudiation of the Scriptures that has become the present-day fad among those, who claim they have a mission from superior wisdom to pick out their really worthy parts, assumes that human consciousness of goodness must prescribe the laws of divine government. God must not do what they think good-willing men would not do. Their good-willing men may have very little care whether the kingdom of the sin-expelling Christ is set up or not. What they think would be happiness to mankind is what solely interests them, and they do not even stop to reflect, or are too blind to see, that where there is to be happiness there must be holiness. They will not consent to God's demanding holiness, and fire up and blaze with furious rhetoric when they are pointed to the way the Bible says God prepares a holy people for himself. Of course they will not believe that whatever it unfolds must be right, when they have set themselves to the work of overthrowing belief in the Bible. If the Bible is believed in, Calvinism must be believed in. When we have got rid of the Bible, we are free to pronounce Calvinism devilish.

Man calls his works eternal; God calls them fleeting. Man conceives that they are built of rock; God says, "Nay, sand; or, worse than that, they are air." Man says he erects them for eternity; God blows but for a moment, and where are they? Like baseless fabrics of a vision, they are passed and gone forever.—Spurgeon.