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EDITORIAL FOREWORD.

When the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, U. S. A., celebrated its Sesquicentennial at its meeting in Philadelphia last May, Dr. B. R. Lacy, Jr., President of Union Theological Seminary, Richmond, delivered one in the series of addresses, speaking on Friday evening, May 27th, on "The Presbyterian Church in Colonial Days."

The Synod of Virginia, organized in 1788 at the New Providence Presbyterian Church, Brownsburg, Va., gave Wednesday evening, September 14th, 1938, to a program commemorative of its Sesquicentennial. The service was held in Schauffler Hall of Union Theological Seminary, Richmond. Dr. J. J. Murray, of Lexington, Va., presided, and addresses were delivered by Dr. W. H. T. Squires, of Norfolk, Va., on "The Presbyterian Church in the Colony of Virginia, 1562-1788," and Dr. Hunter B. Blakely, of Staunton, Va., on "The Synod of Virginia Surveys Her Task and Faces the Future." We are pleased to present the addresses of Drs. Lacy, Squires and Blakely in this number of the REVIEW.

THE REVISIONS SOUND RETREAT,
WHILE THE BUGLES OF REVIVING CONVICTIONS
ARE BLOWING THE REVEILLE.

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"Voices from Europe of intense piety are sounding the muchly needed reveillé to the Presbyterian hosts and are inspiring a living response." This was the tonic note which Dr. Thomson, professor of Christian dogmatics in Edinburgh, struck at the last Calvinistic Congress. But the Revisions proposed to our Church are not catching step with these reviving convictions; rather they are chiefly calling us to retreat from the grand affirmations which expressed the faith of our fathers.

Any real advance in the formulation of Christian Confessions must come about as the expression of great convictions, generally newly realized or freshly appreciated. If one looks at the form of the proposed Revisions he discovers that the major part of them simply reproduce the Cumberland Revisions of 1814, the U. S. A. Revisions of 1903 and our Brief Statement of 1913. In form they are certainly not post-war. Even the teaching that Calvinistic particularism does not necessarily mean parsimony is not new, as the writings of the great Southern Calvinists and Warfield's *The Saviour of the World* sufficiently prove. Most of the other Revisions will blunt the edge either of consistent Calvinism or of the Presbyterian-Puritan testimony against the errors of Roman Catholicism. The process of paring down the faith of our fathers is certainly not a confessional advance.

It may be that in their emotional fervour the Presbyterian fathers at times expressed themselves with undue severity against the perversions of Rome. But even this fervid force expresses great conviction quite in contrast with our pallid formularies. As a matter of fact, the Westminster Confession is less full in its condemnation of Romanism than the Scottish Covenants which specified as errors the several doctrines and practices of Rome

which were either contrary or in addition to God's Word. One of these was so vigorous in denouncing these errors that it was called the Negative Confession and described as the touchstone to try and discern Papists from Protestants.

The peril is that the Revision is taking the edge off of these testimonies at the very time that Romanists errors are creeping into our Church. We are erecting altars, something that was condemned in every Scottish Covenant and which is counter to the present custom of a minister standing *behind* the table to administer the communion both in Scotland and in Switzerland. At the altar in heaven, the High Priest of our profession ministers. Further, Ave Marias are being sung in the Sabbath worship services in direct violation of both the First and the Second Commandments as they are interpreted in our catechisms. From observation of Roman Catholic government in Europe, Professor Brunner stated his conviction that the Pope was the anti-Christ, an *inside* opponent more serious than Stalin or Hitler, while in *Here We Stand*, Prof. D. H. Sasse maintains the Lutheran statement that the papacy is the anti-Christ.

However, let us turn our attention to the great convictions which are emerging in post-war Christianity and see what the Revisions do with these convictions. I would mention,

First, *the superiority of the Word of God to the word of man*. This is the theme of many of Barth's books and provides the designation of his disciples. But the conviction is much more widespread than 'the theologians of the Word,' being incorporated by K. Heim, H. Sasse, Lutheran Confessionalist, E. Staehelin, and many British theologians. H. R. Mackintosh commends Barth for testifying against modernistic theology for seeking to satisfy human intelligence rather than to understand, obey and set forth the Word of God, for finding the supreme criterion in the mind of the living Church rather than in Scripture. In seeking to express man's thought of God rather than God's thoughts of man the Church forgot that she stood under the authority and judgment of God. "So Modern Protestantism lost the proper criterion for Church teaching, the standard set over against it." Instead of submitting to the Bible, she contended in the name of Christian

liberty that she possessed the inherent right of determining how far she would let herself be judged by the Bible. (*Types of Modern Theology*, pp. 269, 270.)

It seems to the writer that certain of the proposed Revisions, considered purely as objective statements, do present this Modern Protestant view which places the mind and word of man above the Word of God; rather than the rising conviction that the obedience of faith requires the judgment of our thinking and actions by God's Word. For example, although Paul twice sets forth that God hardeneth some for the manifestation of His power (Rom. 9:17, 22), the Revisions substitute the word 'right' for the Apostle's word 'power.' In defense of this change it has been said that 'right' is used in the American Revised Version's translation of verse 21 with reference to the potter. However, this is too weak a translation of the Greek word *exsousia*, as may be seen by comparing the Latin, French and German translations of the same. And, in any case, this is in the parable. In both cases Paul uses the word *dunamis* when speaking of God. In changing this word, the Revisions use a word which seems better to men in place of the word which God gave through His inspired Apostle. In teaching salvation without a profession of the Christian religion (X.iv) the Revisions apparently do a similar thing (cf. Rom. 10:10). Again, in omitting from the Revised Confession phrases that are Scriptural in thought and in expression, such as, "He extendeth or withholdeth mercy as He pleaseth" and He "doth blind and harden" and "elect infants," the Revisions seem to follow the wisdom of men rather than the Word of God.

These are not mere matters of detail. An adequate apprehension of God as He hath revealed Himself requireth the equal recognition of His love and His sovereignty, His goodness and His severity (Rom. 11:22), that He is eternal in love and infinite in majesty, both Father and Lord (Mt. 11:25, Lk. 10:21). The first article in the Brief Statement, which stands as the first article in the new creed, is largely quoted from Exodus 34:6, 7. But in quoting, it omits the doctrine of the severity of God, namely, that He will by no means clear the guilty. And this example is typical of all the recommendations. The Revisions

ring the changes on God's love, mercy, universal compassions, and repeal or soften the Scriptural testimonies to His wrath, sovereignty and power. Moreover, according to the doctrine of Schleiermacher, only these new statements represent the voice of the living Church. That is, a minister who was influenced by Schleiermacher's point of view would hold that he was preaching according to the faith of the Church if he preached the universalistic message of love, mercy and grace and left out the Biblical doctrines of the severity and wrath of God. Thus, men could plead the authority of the Church for setting an idol in place of the living God.

Second, *The Finality and Necessity of the Christian Religion*. The Religionsgeschichtliche movement led by Troeltsch has insisted on a historical relativism according to which there can be no special revelation and no absolute estimate of Christ and the task of the future is to effect a synthesis of Christianity with Islam, Brahmanism, Judaism, etc. In line with this movement the Jerusalem Mission Conference spent most of its time discussing the values of non-Christian religions and *Re-thinking Missions* proposed a synthesis of all idealistic thought to form the "New Testament of every existing religion." Ghandi proposed receiving into Hinduism the Sermon on the Mount and Christ as one of the many incarnations of Rama.

Against this humanistic tendency a new conviction of the absolute Deity of Christ and the uniqueness and finality of the religion He founded has been forging ahead. This conviction finds expression in C. W. Hodge's *The Finality of the Christian Religion*; in protests by Heim and Richter at the Jerusalem Conference and the condemnation of this movement thereafter by Barth and Macnicol; in articles by Machen, Speer and Zwemer condemning *Re-thinking Missions*; in the declarations of the Confessional Church at Barmen and Dahlem against synthesis with paganism. The conviction that burns in these declarations is comparable to that which made the creeds of the Reformation. Likewise, expressive of this revived conviction is H. Kraemer's *The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World*, written for the Madras Conference.

Now the unrevised confession X.iv has a glorious statement of the absolute necessity of professing the Christian religion for salvation, which is in line with the New Testament, mission movements and the great ages of faith. On the other hand, the Revision plays into the position of Ghandi, Troeltsch and other syncretistic and synthetic movements by teaching that those who do not profess the Christian religion but profess and conform to other religions (e. g. Hinduism) may nevertheless be saved by Christ.

Third, *Post-war Theology is Marked by a New Realization of Evil, Demonic and Human*. Again it is being recognized that man is always in the wrong before God. He stands in contradiction to his Maker and to Grace. Kant admitted radical evil in man, but in the end held that man must lift himself. Kierkegaard, on the other hand, declared that Christ must enter through closed doors to save him. Erasmus, Luther and Calvin held that the slavery of the will was the chief difference between the Protestants and the Romanists. Doumergue, Jean de Saussure of cathedral in Geneva* and Barth have realized the correctness of this position, the latter presenting the depravity of man in even darker colors than did Calvin. The Nazi Paganism denies that Germans are marred by original sin; but the accounts of their treatment of Jews in concentration camps sufficiently prove the doctrine of total depravity to others. In a current play Bernard Shaw says that man is a failure as a political animal. The realization of man's failure both in his philosophy, economics, politics, ethics, and social organization is driving men back to the doctrine of total depravity. And yet the Revisions weaken the doctrine of human depravity and consequently break down the great distinction between the Protestant and the Roman Catholic theology.

Fourth, *The Kingdom of God is fundamentally eschatological* rather than universalistically construed as an ideal order composed largely of unregenerated men. Vos says that the Kingdom of which Jesus spoke meant in the first place an eschatological state of affairs and its preaching was an eschatological message. W. Koehler, *Dogmengeschichte* (p. 33) says that the Kingdom

**Proceedings of the Fourth Calvinistic Congress*, p. 233.

of God was *von Haus* eschatological-transcendent and in so far as Christendom awaits the Kingdom at the end, the sovereign Kingship of Christ, it is that still. K. L. Schmidt who writes the article on the Kingdom in Kittel's *Wörterbuch* insists that it is not a political or social order wrought by man, not an immanent worldly ideal order such as philosophy and the social gospel and Nazism and Marxism imagine; but catastrophic, supernatural, eschatological, wrought by God's own hand at the return of Christ. For those who are suffering with Christ today there is the assurance of reigning with Him then. Professor Wendland of Kiel in *The Kingdom of God and History* warns us against identifying the Kingdom with any form of messianism—be it democracy, the League of Nations, socialism, nationalism or anti-alcoholism—which does not have Jesus Christ as its center and its realization in the eschatological state. "The preaching of the coming of God who as Lord and King of the world will be and is its sole consummator and redeemer is the most drastic criticism of these utopias." "As the Risen One Jesus is the Lord who is to come again, judge of the world in the glory of the Father, conqueror of all powers that set themselves against God, the victor who sets up the Kingdom and hands it over to the Father." "The Kingdom breaks into history in the man Jesus of Nazareth, in the Church it is present in the Word and with the Spirit, in sacraments and deeds of love, and is realized at the *parousia* of the Lord toward which the history of the world is moving." K. Heim insists that Christ is the world-fulfiller, and that the Church is like a bridge resting on two piers—Golgotha and the visible mighty laying hold of the cosmic processes by Christ at His return. (*Jesus der Welt vollender*, p. 172).

Now the unrevised standards present the Church as the visible Kingdom of Grace and the stage following the return of Christ as the Kingdom of Glory. But the Revised Catechism, 90, proposes a different conception of the Kingdom, one based on Ritschl's notion that the Kingdom is a present, immanent ideal world order and Rauschenbusch's doctrine that this is to be brought about by the social gospel. Both Prof. Wendland and Prof. Thomson of Edinburgh solemnly warn us that the notion of a Christian world or Christian nation means the secularization of the Church

and the substitution of universalism for the Gospel. It is a well known fact that at the Jerusalem Conference the Americans were advocating this immanent, worldly, humanistic view of the Kingdom and that the German delegates had returned to the concept of the Kingdom as supernatural, wrought by God's hand. The Revision means a change of our conception of the Kingdom to fit the Ritschlian-Social Gospel view which is fast giving place to the renewed realization that the Kingdom is God's work wrought both in its eschatological stage and in its present preparatory stage by His saving interventions. In the unrevised standards the Kingdom of Grace requires Divine regeneration and the Kingdom of Glory Divine consummation; in the proposed change it is wrought by man in a society inclusive of unregenerated men.

Fifth, *The New Realization of the Centrality and Glory of Christ*. If one compares the Continental Christian thinking of today with the picture Warfield drew of it at the beginning of this century he is struck by the new realization of Christ's glory—true God and true man—and His centrality in the revelation of God to sinners. Calvin warned us to begin our knowledge of God with Scriptures. Otherwise the evil in the world may lead man to assume an ultimate dualism, or the notion that evil is in God, or a limited God who is somehow dependent on the universe or man. We properly begin with Scripture and the Barthians say end there; while the Calvinists find a confirmation for those parts of the Word, which deal with general revelation, in nature and in man. Our theism must be a Christian theism even as our Christianity must be a theistic Christianity.

Barth's primary criticism of Wollebius' Compendium, a Calvinistic summary contemporaneous with the Westminster Assembly, was that it did not place the source of its theology—the Bible and Christ as its theme—at the forefront of its affirmations. In the light of this criticism the Westminster Confession which opens with the doctrine of Scripture is more modern than the Brief Statement which begins with the doctrine of God without a preliminary statement as to the source for that doctrine.

A hasty glance at the form of chapter III would lead current theologians to ask for preliminary paragraphs relating the decrees

of God to Scripture and to Christ (*amplifications* rather than *excisions*). However, a more careful examination of the content of this chapter would show that it was a part of a Confession which begins with Scripture, that every statement in this chapter is fortified with the Word, and that the eighth paragraph explicitly subordinates the doctrine on this subject to the Word. Thus it is inexcusable to use the Westminster doctrine of the decrees to oppose the Great Commission or any other teaching of the Word.

Further, this is not the statement of the decrees of a pagan God, but (II.iii) of the Christian Triune God. As the Father knoweth all things in knowing thoroughly the Son and hath chosen the elect in Him (III.v), even so the Son knoweth all things, and especially His sheep, in knowing completely the Father (Mt. 11:27; Jn. 10:14-15). In a day when man has surrendered eighteenth century confidence in his own ability to rationalize the universe and many are drifting to the irrationalism of existential thinking it is essential that we find the basis for 'the reasonableness of things' in the intelligence of the uncreated complete personality who in His Incarnation has manifest the truth that our highest human values are also absolute and eternal values. The simplest distinctions between true and false, right and wrong, or the realization that time is irreversible, imply rationality; but, as a representative philosopher recognizes, this rationality is only to be found in the purpose of God revealed in the one historical person who was true God and true man.¹ Verily, all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden in Christ. The Lamb slain from the foundation of the world is the theodicy which justifies the holy Jehovah in decreeing a history for our sinful race. We are assured of our election only as we find ourselves in Him; while Calvin described the preterition of others as an unsolved depth of the Cross.

The very verbiage of III.iii is framed to allow a mild Calvinistic interpretation of this paragraph. Predestination is used only for the elect, foreordination for the others. Calvin himself said that God's decree in reference to the lost was in such a way that the cause and ground of their damnation is in themselves.

¹Taylor, A. E., *The Christian Hope of Immortality*, 1938, pp. 50, 47, 73, 93.

Girardeau followed Augustine and Calvin against the New England theology in stressing the fact that man fell solely by his own will which had full power of choosing between alternatives. Webb and Shedd distinguished between the efficacious and the permissive decrees. The treachery and perdition of Judas were as definitely in the decrees of God as was the repentance of Peter—but in that plan in a different way. Christ interceded for Peter and God efficaciously saved him. This genuine, but mild, Calvinism would not curtail the testimony to the Divine decrees and thereby jeopardize the only adequate foundation for rational thinking; but rather interpret these paragraphs so that the blame for those who are lost falls on the creature, and all the glory of saving sinners from the *massa perditionis* belongs to God. At this point, the interpretation suggested substantially accords with the position of one of the most attractive Lutheran theologians of the Word, A. Köberle, *The Quest for Holiness*.

Dr. A. Lecerf, professor of dogmatics in Paris and leader of the French revival of Calvinism, offers the following test for Christian doctrine: "For faith, a dogmatic proposition is religious in the measure in which it puts in evidence the unique character of the sovereignty and the independence of God on the one hand, and the absoluteness of our subjection to Him on the other." Testing both the Westminster Confession and the proposed revisions by this current statement of the Calvinistic norm the writer has no hesitation in declaring that the old is better.