

The Presbyterian JOURNAL

JUNE 21, 1978
VOL. 37, NO. 8
\$6.00 A YEAR

SUPPORTING THE ENLARGEMENT OF A PRESBYTERIAN WITNESS LOYAL TO SCRIPTURE AND THE REFORMED FAITH

Not Inerrant . . . But

Since no one claims that the Westminster Confession is inerrant, it is theoretically subject to improvement. But assuming that the aim of reformulation includes the preservation of all the thought unchanged, and is not a disguise for lowering the standards, one must still ask two questions: Is the present generation capable of improving the creed? And, if so, is it worth the energy?

One answer to the second question would be a government grant so that a hundred theologians could meet for five years in a national cathedral. Or are we now so adept that a committee of three could do the job in one summer?

It would not be an easy job. Who would play the role of George Gillespie? Or Moderator Twisse? And Samuel Rutherford? The theological ability of such men was enormous; Dr. J. Gresham Machen asserted that it could not be duplicated today.

—Gordon H. Clark
see p. 8

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON FOR JULY 9
DEVOTION FOR JULY

CONF

Collection
University of NC Lib
Chapel Hill NC 27514



Mailbag

TOO SIMPLISTIC

Is it really necessary for you to keep referring to Senator Mark Hatfield as "the most dangerous man" in American politics to make the point that you disagree with some of his policies?

The title of Senator Hatfield's most important book, *Between a Rock and a Hard Place*, suggests that he appreciates the difficulty of arriving at some of the conclusions he holds, and even that he may not feel comfortable with his conclusions on some of the difficult issues facing our country.

In any case, the *Journal* doesn't seem to sense such agony. Everything is very simple, cut and dried, wrapped up and tied, ready to deliver. I think

people would listen to you more if you admitted that it's not all that easy to apply Christ's principles to the world we're in.

The main thing, though, is that you ought to treat a fellow believer like Senator Hatfield with a little more love than you have been doing.

—John Millen
Miami, Fla.

WRONG ON DIVORCE

I wish to respond to the news article on divorce (May 24 *Journal*) which stated, "It is generally conceded that the committee's conclusions were substantially prompted by the fact that both ministers and elders who have been divorced are even now serving the Church."

Such a comment is unwarranted in that you imply that the committee did not have the courage or integrity to follow the Scripture but were obligated to find a conclusion that would cause no difficulty for our divorced

brethren. As one of the members of that committee, as well as one who also filed a minority report disagreeing with the official position of the committee, I would testify to the integrity of the men on that committee that they sought only to be true to Scripture as they saw it.

In addition, you were incorrect in reporting the minority position. The minority report states in sum that no man should be considered for church office who has been divorced on other than Biblical grounds in order that the church and its leadership may be above reproach by those outside and inside the church.

—(Rev.) James P. Campbell
Columbus, Ga.

A POSTMIL APPROVES

I was most happy to see the article by Bruce E. Hoyt, "What About the Antichrist?" (*Journal*, May 17) and the one by Grover E. Gunn III, "The Parenthesis Issue in Prophecy" (*Journal*, May 10). I, too, am a post-millennialist.

The conclusions of Romans 11 seem inescapable with respect to the glorious future of Christ's Church. Likewise, Matthew 24:34 seems to leave much of the current material on eschatology and prophecy unfounded and largely off-track. Again, it is refreshing to see some of these passages dealt with in an honest and scholarly manner.

—Jon Jay Verdick
Mission Hills, Cal.

The Presbyterian JOURNAL

ISSN 0032-7549

REV. G. AIKEN TAYLOR, PH.D., EDITOR
CHARLES E. BOYCE JR., ASSISTANT EDITOR
REV. JAMES A. McALPINE, MANAGING EDITOR
JOEL BELZ, ASSOCIATE MANAGING EDITOR

Seeking to promote a rising reformation in God's Church according to the whole counsel of God known as the Reformed faith; to define, describe, popularize and promote the Reformed faith; to encourage and assist Reformed conservatives; and to report on activities in Presbyterian and Reformed bodies.

THIS WEEK—

VOL. 37, NO. 8, JUNE 21, 1978

CHANGES IN THE CONFESSION?..... 8

Church leaders speak out on changes they would—or would not—make in Westminster

DEPARTMENTS—

Editorials.....	12
The Layman and his Church.....	13
Sunday School Lesson, July 9.....	14
Devotion for July.....	16
Book Reviews.....	17

THE PRESBYTERIAN JOURNAL, a weekly magazine devoted to the statement, defense and propagation of the Gospel, "the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints," is published every Wednesday by the Southern Presbyterian Journal Co., Inc., in Asheville, N.C. Second class postage paid at Asheville, N.C. 28802.

SUBSCRIPTION PRICE: \$6 a year for individuals (add \$2 for overseas), \$4.50 for members of Every Family Plan churches.

EDITORIAL AND BUSINESS OFFICES: The Innsbruck Mall, 85 Tunnel Rd., Asheville,

N.C. 28805. Phone (704) 254-4015.

SUBSCRIPTIONS AND ADVERTISING: Address P.O. Box 3075, Asheville, N.C. 28802. Please allow three weeks for address change. Include old and new addresses and ZIP codes.

EDITORIAL AND NEWS: Address P.O. Box 3108, Asheville, N.C. 28802. Manuscripts on topics of current interest welcome.

POSTMASTER: Send Form 3579 to the Presbyterian Journal, Box 3075, Asheville, N.C. 28802.

CALL A SPADE A SPADE!

In 30 years of work in and about Latin America with United Press International and the U.S. Information Agency, I have never known a missionary of any denomination who taught a native to eat with a fork rather than with chop sticks. I have never known one to teach customs or a theology which could in any sense be described by this illustration ("Contextualization," *Journal*, May 31). Missionaries, by and large, are not unintelligent people!

I have seen, however, some who have been away from home so long that they have come to accept the so-called "Christianity" of many native, professional, college campus leaders who say that Christ, who preached freedom, would have U.S. Christians

Changes in the Confession?

However much he may love and appreciate the Westminster Confession of Faith and the catechisms of the Church, no well taught Presbyterian claims infallibility for them.

Yet because of efforts to replace those historic standards with substitutes—which were feeble at best and sometimes blatantly contrary to Scripture at worst—many conservatives in various Presbyterian denominations have opposed any changes at all. Better to forfeit the opportunity for small improvements, they argue, than to open a Pandora's box.

To discover what a cross section of ministers, considered conservative, think about the matter, the *Journal* asked 50 men from seven Presbyterian denominations to complete this statement: "The single thing I would most like to add to or change in the Westminster Confession if it were being written this year is. . . ."

Their responses reflect the widespread respect which Westminster enjoys among the Churches' leaders. No respondent called for basic changes; some insisted that there should be none at all.

Representatives of three denominations—the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America, and the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod—have been working for several years to modernize the language of Westminster. Even on that issue, however, there is some disagreement among the respondents to this survey.

Here are the comments of those who took time to answer the *Journal's* brief question:

JAY E. ADAMS

Author, professor, lecturer
Juliette, Georgia
(OPC)

"The single thing I would change is the language. There is little doubt in my mind that the Confession could be much more useful were the language modernized. Such updating is long overdue. Even the punctuation is unintelligible; it was designed to indicate pauses in reading and not for grammatical purposes. Here is a task that the North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council might undertake."

LANE G. ADAMS, Pastor
Second Presbyterian Church
Memphis, Tennessee
(PCUS)

"I would like to remove the limits placed on God by the blanket announcement that the day of miracles has passed. I would like a clear statement made in reference to the doc-

trine of conversion and sanctification in regard to how much time one should expect to take in moving from the new birth to a measure of maturity. I also would appreciate a clearer presentation of evangelism as a number one concern of the local church."

WILLIAM S. BARKER

President, Covenant Seminary
St. Louis, Missouri
(RPCES)

"In this age of apostasy it is important that the Westminster Standards be retained as the test of orthodoxy in accordance with our ordination vows. This does not mean, however, that they are perfect or infallible. They point to the Scriptures as the only infallible rule. There should be discussion, therefore, of how they may be supplemented or improved.

"In at least three areas, we need fuller answers than the Westminster Standards provide. In ethics more

needs to be done with Jesus' exposition of the law; more specific application to modern issues is needed in the same way the Larger Catechism addressed itself to the issues of the 17th century. In ecclesiology more needs to be said concerning the purity of the Church and concerning the relationship of Church and state. In eschatology more needs to be determined concerning the millennium and its implication for the present kingship of Christ."

GEORGE A. ANDERSON

Professor, Graham Bible College
Bristol, Tennessee
(RPCES)

"I would like an addition to the final chapter giving a summary of the Biblical teaching about the coming of Christ—a positive summary of Biblical content—not a 'schedule of events.'"

EDMUND P. CLOWNEY

President, Westminster Seminary
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
(OPC)

"The question is impossible for me to answer. If the Westminster Confession were written now, everything would be expressed differently, so as to be clear in the modern context. But the system of doctrine would be the same.

"For example, it is clear that chapter one teaches an inerrant Scripture, but today it would have to be phrased differently for that to be apparent. So too in the description of the mission of the Church. When the Presbyterian Church USA added a chapter on the love of God and missions, it proved misleading because it did not harmonize with the basic doctrine of the Confession."

DONALD G. BLOESCH

Professor, University of Dubuque
Dubuque, Iowa
(UPCUSA)

"I would like to change part 3 of Chapter III, which affirms predestination to eternal damnation, by substituting this wording: 'By the decree of God, for the manifestation of his glory, all who believe are predestined to everlasting life, and those who do not believe cut themselves off from God's gracious election.' Similar changes would also be made in the other sections of Chapter III."

ROBERT K. CHURCHILL

Minister
Amarillo, Texas
(OPC)

"The work on election and predestination is excellent, but if I mistake not it is strongly supralapsarian. The Confession is more than great theology—it is also great English. These two are married; what God hath joined together let not man put asunder. But let's have a go at it, as the British would say."

GORDON H. CLARK

Professor, Covenant College
Lookout Mountain, Tennessee
(RPCES)

"Since no one claims that the Westminster Confession is inerrant, it is theoretically subject to improvement. But assuming that the aim of reformulation includes the preservation of all the thought unchanged, and is not a disguise for lowering the standards, one must still ask two questions: Is the present generation capable of improving the creed? And, if so, is it worth the energy?"

"One answer to the second question would be a government grant so that a hundred theologians could meet for five years in a national cathedral. Or are we now so adept that a committee of three could do the job in one summer?"

"It would not be an easy job. Who would play the role of George Gillespie? Or Moderator Twisse? And Samuel Rutherford? The theological ability of such men was enormous; Dr. J. Gresham Machen asserted that

it could not be duplicated today.

"In addition to their knowledge of theology, their command of the English language is hardly equaled in the age when Johnny can't read. Examples of words and phraseology, the precision of which contemporary theologians might be hard pressed to duplicate, are the verbs 'impute' and 'convey' and the phrase 'any spiritual good accompanying salvation.'"

"What seems more necessary is a tightening of the ordination vows that now permit an all too vague subscription to the 'system of doctrine' rather than to each of the doctrines severally.

"Finally, the single thing I would change would be to add the word 'inerrant.'"

HARVIE M. CONN

Professor, Westminster Seminary
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
(OPC)

"Since confessions are creedal rereadings of the Bible in the face of each Church's situation and time, to add to or change the Westminster Confession in 1978 would be to tack on footnotes to the 17th century, and to relegate three centuries of the Spirit's leading to an appendix.

"The answer lies rather in a complete rewriting of the Confession, building into a new formulation the Biblical wisdom it lays for us, but addressing the new questions of the 20th century in the light of the new insights the Spirit has taught us since the 17th century.

"This approach will not simply say, 'We need a chapter on the kingdom of God and its relation to the Church' or 'We need a new look at *ordo salutis*.' Presbyterianism in the U.S. has engaged in that tacking on process in the past. We need a Confession that answers these questions on a more foundational level.

"The questions that need to be asked, among others, are these: What shall we say about the Scriptures in the face of neo-orthodoxy's claims? How shall we construct a universal creed in the face of the particularities of the cultures of the world? How can we make central to the Confession our responsibility to the world and our God-centered call to true humanization in Christ without getting lost in

the evangelical's ghetto-church mentality or the liberation theologian's Molotov cocktail? How shall we speak Biblical truth to our world without letting the world dictate our agenda?"

RICHARD DEWITT

Professor, Reformed Seminary
Jackson, Mississippi
(PCA)

"I would modernize the language—rephrase the material simply and clearly.

"Next, some areas—such as the matter of spiritual gifts and the doctrine of the Holy Spirit—do need clarification and emphasis."

CHARLES DUNAHOO

Christian Education Coordinator
Montgomery, Alabama
(PCA)

"I would like a clearer statement on Presbyterian polity. I would also question the references to the pope as the antichrist, though I believe the Roman Catholic system as well as other modern cults are part of the antichrist system."

ROBERT G. EPPLER

Pastor, First Presbyterian Church
Louisville, Kentucky
(PCA)

"I would most like a determined, hands-off policy. Why toy with near perfection? Our Church fathers possessed a divinely inspired clarity of vision we apparently cannot emulate today."

ARTHUR F. GLASSER

Professor, Fuller Seminary
Pasadena, California
(RPCES)

"The world of 17th-century England no longer exists. The parochial concerns and polemic stance of the Westminster divines are inadequate in defining the will of God for His people today. In four basic areas they manifest an inadequate understanding of the central theme of Scripture:

"1) That the Church should 'bring

about obedience to the faith . . . among all nations' (Rom. 1:5). The Westminster Confession is utterly silent about the mandate to 'make disciples of all nations.'

"(2) That the Holy Spirit—His ministry and His gifts—has been given to the Church to make possible this missionary obedience. The Westminster Confession largely ignores the third person of the Godhead.

"(3) That Christians should grapple responsibly with the moral and social issues of the day. The Westminster Confession generates no concern for social justice and has little appreciation for culture.

"(4) That the Churches should resist the separatism that nullifies their witness before the world (John 17:21) and participate heartily in open dialogue with all who profess faith in Jesus Christ (Rom. 15:7). The Westminster Confession fails to prepare Christians to cope creatively with the theological, cultural and racial plurality within the worldwide Church in our day."

GEORGE FULLER, Executive Director, National Presbyterian and Reformed Fellowship Valley Forge, Pennsylvania (PCA)

"A statement regarding the Church's diaconal role in the midst of modern social and economic structures."

RICHARD W. GRAY, Pastor
Coventry Presbyterian Church
Coventry, Connecticut
(RPCES)

"The great glory of Christianity is the resurrection of Christ and of the Christian. It enables us to correct the Greek view of the body as a prison with matter considered evil. The Confession should reflect more of the glory of the physical by reading the pertinent New Testament teachings concerning the flesh through the eyes of the Old Testament rather than through the eyes of the Greeks.

"And what of the Holy Spirit in this charismatic day? Does He receive His due in the Confession? Pentecost and its significance for the Church need to have emphasis equal to the in-

carnation. The graces and gifts of the Spirit should be formulated in a chapter entitled 'Of the Holy Spirit and the Church.' "

JOHN H. GERSTNER

Professor, Pittsburgh Seminary
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
(UPCUSA)

"I would add a sentence or phrase to Chapter I showing the argument from miracles as part of the way the Bible 'abundantly evidences itself' to be the Word of God. The statement on the covenant could be sharpened to answer more explicitly the false interpretations of the Westminster Confession on this subject today. The statement on the Church should define schism more explicitly."

HARRY S. HASSALL, Covenant Fellowship of Presbyterians
Murfreesboro, Tennessee
(PCUS)

"I should like to see Westminster updated in language, style and format (a sort of RSV edition). Second, I should like to have Westminster speak more forcefully, always Biblically, on such issues as the Church's mission, evangelism, social concerns as fruit of the Gospel, and the Christians' corporate responsibilities in Christ. Finally, I should like a chapter on the Holy Spirit to speak of the gifts and the charismatic renewal from a friendly viewpoint."

R. NORMAN HERBERT, Pastor
First Presbyterian Church
Waukegan, Illinois
(UPCUSA)

"The single thing I would most like is for the major bodies which drew long term life from the Westminster Confession to accept it again."

GEORGE W. KNIGHT III

Professor, Covenant Seminary
St. Louis, Missouri
(RPCES)

"(1) That God is *love* should be added to the list of His attributes in

Chapter II; 2) A full section on the Holy Spirit which would deal with the problems of today; 3) A developed section on evangelism and missions; 4) A clarification of Chapter XXVII, which would indicate who may administer the sacraments, and which would correlate those sacraments to the *ministry* of the Word but not absolutely to the *minister* of the Word; 5) A further section on the Church that would include rudimentary principles of Biblical Church government."

GEORGE W. LONG, Pastor
Lookout Mountain Presbyterian Church
Lookout Mountain, Tennessee
(PCUS)

"Chapter III, on negative foreordination, is like putting all the pepper intended for a T-bone steak on one bite—one sort of gags. This chapter is harsher on the subject than is Scripture.

"Chapter XXIV, while remonstrating about divorce, nevertheless allows remarriage on less than Scriptural grounds. It is weaker than Scripture.

"Any new confession should approach Scripture as the Word of God, not merely as a witness to it."

GRADY R. OATES

Past Moderator, Associate
Reformed Presbyterian Church
Bartow, Florida
(ARP)

"Sorry to be of no help, but I favor no change in such a great document."

JACK C. OATES, Pastor,
First Presbyterian Church
Clinton, South Carolina
(PCA)

"I would like to change the literary or linguistic style. The language is dated in its words and expressions at numerous points. The footnotes also need reworking to reveal more clearly their relevance to the text. Hopefully this reworking, or the addition of a more complete appendix, would eliminate the need for the General Note and provide greater assurance that

the assertions of the text are indeed adequately grounded in the Scripture."

JOHN P. OLIVER, Pastor
First Presbyterian Church
Augusta, Georgia
(PCA)

"I would like a section clarifying the person and work of the Holy Spirit as this relates to His ministration of baptism, gifts, fillings and special anointings or enduements in the Church in apostolic times and since then."

NELSON K. MALKUS
World Presbyterian Missions
Wilmington, Delaware
(RPCES)

"There might be added a carefully worded chapter on the Holy Spirit. I cannot understand why the Westminster divines left it out.

"Before the 'Jesus Revolution,' there was a great amount of talk about the need to update the English of the Confession so as to be more easily understood by the youth. The almost unanimous choice of the current 'youth revival' for the *King James Version*, however, kills that seeming necessity. The material in the Confession, even when couched in more modern language, will still require explanation.

"I would like some stronger statement regarding the Church's responsibility for evangelism and missions. Chapter XXV, section 3, presently says it all—and it isn't very much!"

WILLIAM CHILDS ROBINSON
Retired Professor
Clinton, South Carolina
(PCUS)

"Instead of a revision of the Westminster Confession, I request an increased editorial emphasis upon the 'Article of the Reformation,' justification, as is already so well stated in the Westminster standards. For God has made *Him* who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we (who are sinners in ourselves) might be the *righteousness of God in Christ*."

RANDALL T. RUBLE
Dean, Erskine Seminary
Due West, South Carolina
(ARP)

"I would like to change the dated language in which the excellent content is set forth. There has been enough debate in the last quarter of this century on the word 'infallible' alone to justify such an undertaking."

C. GREGG SINGER
Professor, Atlanta School
of Biblical Studies
Atlanta, Georgia
(ARP)

"I see no need for any changes. To initiate changes is to encourage the demand for doctrinal changes of an undesirable and un-Biblical nature. No one is suggesting that Shakespeare, Milton or other writers of that era should be modernized. Why the Westminster Confession?"

MORTON H. SMITH, Stated Clerk
Presbyterian Church in America
Clinton, Mississippi
(PCA)

"I find the Westminster Confession and Catechisms to be so satisfactory as confessional statements that I do not advocate any particular additions or changes. I would be happy to see the matter of the inerrancy of Scripture stated more explicitly, although it is already the position of the Standards implicitly. The same could be said for the mission of the Church."

J. G. VOS
Professor, Geneva College
Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania
(RPCNA)

"On the whole I am opposed to a new confession. This is not a creed-making age. People are too down-right ignorant of theology. As with modern English Bible versions, the theology gets tampered with. The specific and particular are reduced to the general—such as substituting deliverance for justification. That throws the Reformation away. Deliverance is no more equal to justification than

food is to tomato soup.

"Also, Chapter XXV, 6 is a flat contradiction of Chapter I, 6; what we know about the pope of Rome comes from tradition, not from Scripture. Chapter XXXI, 2 reflects the Erastianism of 17th-century England; it is un-Biblical and should be omitted."

WILLIAM J. STANWAY
Professor, Reformed Seminary
Jackson, Mississippi
(PCA)

"There might well be a section in the chapter on the Church devoted to spelling out the Church's mission in the world.

"Although I agree essentially with Warfield's observations about the addition of a chapter on the Holy Spirit, I believe we might give serious consideration to a section on His person and work.

"A little more on marriage, divorce and remarriage would be useful."

FRED THOMPSON JR., Pastor
Roebuck Presbyterian Church
Roebuck, South Carolina
(PCA)

"I do not wish to see the Confession changed in any way. The old English expressions are clear, and the ancient language and archaic forms impress themselves on the mind in a majestic way that modern phraseology could never do.

"If it were being written in 1978, however, I would like to see further development—in the chapters on the Civil Magistrate and on Synods and Councils—of the theme of Church involvement in public affairs."

JOHN WHITE
Dean, Geneva College
Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania
(RPCNA)

"I would urge that we not think of changing the Westminster Confession but consider drafting an additional document which would be a brief, contemporary Declaration and Testimony that would make the principles of the Confession contemporary and apply them to current situations." □