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I.

THE REVISED CONFESSION.

THE Northern Presbyterians have published their Revised Confession of Faith, and it is proper for other Presbyterians, not of that communion, to review the changes which have been made, with a view to ascertaining whether they are alterations in the mere superficies or in the substantive body of the Calvinistic system. The hilarity with which the revision has been received by such diluted Calvinists as the Cumberland Presbyterians, together with the promptness and enthusiasm with which they offered organic union on the basis of these changes, awakens apprehension, and calls for cautious examination.

An inventory of the changes which have been made will show that the Northern Presbyterians have, (1) explained their former doctrine of Predestination, (2) interpreted their doctrine of the salvation of Dead Infants, (3) restated their doctrine of works done by unregenerate persons, (4) amended their doctrine of Oaths, (5) withdrawn their charge that the Pope of Rome was Antichrist, (6) added a new chapter on the Holy Spirit, (7) and added a new chapter on the Love of God, and Missions.

We are not going to take up these points in detail, but elect, for animadversion, the changes which seem to affect the integrity of the Calvinistic system.

We quote now the new language which is the basis of our fault-finding:

CHAP. XXXV. 11.—“In the gospel God declares his love for the world, and his desire that all men should be saved.”

DECLARATORY STATEMENT.—1. “The doctrine of God’s eternal decree is held in harmony with the doctrine of his love to all mankind, his gift of his Son to be the propitiation for the sins of the whole world. . . . Concerning those who perish, the doctrine of God’s eternal decree is held in harmony with the doctrine that God desires not the death of any sinner.”

Here we have three universal propositions, which have been incorporated in the creed of Northern Presbyterians: (1) The universality of God’s love; (2) the universality of God’s desire; (3) the universality of Christ’s atonement. God loves all men, God desires the salvation of all men, God has made propitiation for the sins of all men—these are the new doctrines which the revisers have added to Calvinism. We claim that they are substantive additions; that they are new doctrines; that they are out of harmony with the Calvinistic system; that they are radical and reconstructive; that they logically issue in universalism—universalism pure and absolute, or universalism conditional and hypothetical; that they are premises which cannot be made to yield that particularism which is the historic mark of Calvinistic soteriology.

The controversies and age-long debates over these topics must be the context in whose light they are to be interpreted and criticised. The Northern Presbyterians have adopted and put into their creed the fundamental premises of their historic opponents. It is hard to see how the enemy can keep from rejoicing—can restrain himself from claiming a surrender of organic doctrine. The Universalist pure and unmodified has ever reasoned thus: God loves all men; God desires the salvation of all men; God has made provision for the salvation of all men; therefore, all men must eventually be saved, or the divine love be shocked and the divine heart disappointed. The Arminian has reasoned from the same premises in this way: God loves all men; God desires the salvation of all men; God has made atonement for all men; therefore, all men will be saved, unless they check the divine love by their wills. The Calvinist, on the contrary, has ever argued: God loves some men; God desires the salvation of some men; God has made atonement for some men; therefore,

only some men will be saved, and they certainly, because nothing can defeat God's desire or disappoint his heart. History is the context, and these new doctrines shoulder towards ancient opponents. Logic will not allow a stop.

The satisfaction, and even the elation, of Cumberland Presbyterians, and all semi-Calvinists, with the new doctrines of the Confession are rational and consistent. Universal love, a universal desire, a universal atonement, implicate a universal vocation. The operation of the Holy Spirit would logically be as extensive as the love of God, as the desire of God, as the death of Christ. Given the premise, God loves all men, the non-elect as well as the elect; add to that the premise, God desires the salvation of all men, of the non-elect as well as of the elect; then add to these the premise, Christ has made a propitiation for the sins of all men, of the non-elect as well as the elect, and the logic has not been invented which can stay this conclusion: the non-elect are as salvable as the elect. These universal propositions would yield the salvation of the universal race, unless the universality of the result is checked by the interposition of the sinful will. This is the very essence of Arminianism. In Calvinism the will of God is the causal efficient of salvation; in Arminianism the will of the sinner is the determining cause.

But let us examine these three new doctrines separately.

I. The Northern Presbyterians have formally set up in their creed the doctrine that *God loves all men*.

Is this correct? Have they said that God loves all men? The new creed declares, "In the gospel God declares his love for the world and his desire that all men should be saved." The words "all men," in the second clause interpret and explain the word "world," in the first clause. Besides, it is inconceivable that God's "love" should be narrower than his "desires." But in another place the new Confession says, "God's eternal decree is held in harmony with the doctrine of his love to all mankind." This language is explicit. Define the human family, and you will define the objects of God's love, according to this document. It can mean nothing else, and was intended to mean nothing else, but that God loves all mankind without exception.

1. This dogma of the universality of God's love is un-Calvinistic. It cannot be made to homologate with this system of particularism; and Calvinism is, if anything, a scheme of limitationism—a plan of salvation in which God has at no point contemplated the whole race, but at every point the salvation of only a part of our race. For this conception, it has been criticised for centuries. Election is, in Calvinism, not universal, but partial; atonement is not for all men, but for some men only; the operation of the Spirit is not upon all, but only upon some; regeneration, justification, adoption, sanctification, glorification—all the benefits of the redemption of Christ are not for all, but only for some; *particularism* is the very genius of the system, the genetic principle of all its soteriology. It is so interpreted by its Confession and its standard expositions. It is the elect who are the objects of God's "free grace and love"; it is believers who are the objects of "the unchangeable love of God"; effectual calling is of his "free and special love to the elect"; the wicked he "doth blind and harden"; they "deserve his wrath and curse." These are statements scattered throughout the Confession, and quoted here to show that the Confession teaches that God's love is "special" and not general, "particular" and not indiscriminate. It is inconsistent to plant in such a Confession the doctrine that God "loves all men," and "desires the salvation of all men." The whole Calvinistic soteriology is but the result of the conception of God's love as electing, particular, discriminating.

2. The doctrine that God loves all men will not harmonize with the divine character, and is therefore untheological.

There are two fundamental forms of feeling in God—love and wrath, ἀγάπη and ὀργή.¹ These emotions are real and essential. The existence of the one necessitates the existence of the other, so that, if there be in him the love of righteousness, there must be in him the hatred of unrighteousness; if he loves the elect, he must be angry with the non-elect. If there be in him no power to be angry at sin, there would be no power to be pleased with obedience. "He who loves the good by this very fact hates

¹ Some attempt has been made to find a substantive difference between ἀγάπη and φιλία, but the words are too nearly synonymous to justify any serious doctrinal distinctions.

the evil, and he who does not hate the evil does not love the good, because the love of goodness issues directly out of the hatred of evil, and the hatred of evil issues directly out of the love of goodness. No one can love life without abhorring death, and no one can have an appetency for light without an antipathy to darkness." This conception is affirmed in the Scriptures. "All they that hate me love death." "Ye that love the Lord hate evil."

Dr. Shedd beautifully says, "Complacency towards righteousness and displacency towards sin are not contraries, but opposites, or antitheses. . . . The relation of opposites or antitheses is that of polarity. Moral love and moral wrath are like two poles, north and south, of the same magnet, or the two manifestations, positive and negative, of the same electricity. Boreal magnetism is as really magnetism as austral, and positive electricity is as really electricity as negative. So, also, moral wrath is as truly holiness as moral love. . . . Accordingly, the two feelings of love of holiness and hatred of evil coexist in the character of God, the most perfect of beings, and in that of angels and redeemed men. Human character is worthless, in proportion as abhorrence of sin is lacking in it." Inability to feel moral indignation is a defect and a weakness in character. Its absence signifies the maudlin. Moral love and moral wrath are but the two sides of the same attribute, the obverse and the reverse sides; but the two hemispheres of the same spherical perfection. The one is awakened by righteousness, the other by sin. They are essential aspects of the divine character; they are not optional properties of his heart. Whatever is holy must give him pleasure, and whatever is wicked must awaken his moral disgust, just because God always sees truly and feels accurately. A sinner must be viewed as elect in Jesus Christ in order to be an object of the divine love; out of Christ he is an object of the divine wrath. It is a deception to tell him that he is an object of God's love.

The Scriptures support this interpretation of the divine character. An examination of any large concordance will show that the "anger" and "wrath" of God, and their cognates, occur as often and as emphatically as do "love" and "mercy," and the whole group of his amiable perfections.

Time was when God's love was universal; it was when he foresaw all men as creatures in his image and likeness, holy as he was holy: then he loved all without distinction because all were good and lovely as they lay in his thought. Time was again when his wrath was universal; it was when all sinned in Adam and fell with him in his first transgression: then his anger was against every man because all were foreseen as guilty and polluted as they lay under his vision. Time was again when he foresees the entire human family divided into two classes—the elect and the non-elect. The two classes, while their constituent members remain the same, are variously designated in the Scriptures: friends and enemies, sheep and goats, children of God and children of the devil, servants of Christ and servants of sin, believers and unbelievers, Israelites and Gentiles, God's people and aliens. Many are the appellations, but the personnel of the two classes is always the same. One of these classes is the unchanging object of God's love, and the other is the unchanging object of his indignation and wrath. It must be so, because he sees correctly and feels truly. When the race had a common estate in holiness, as in Eden, his love was universal; when the same race had a common state in sin, as in the fall antecedently to election, the divine wrath was universal; and when the same race was divided into two classes (in eternity, the elect and non-elect; in time, believers and unbelievers; in the consummation, the glorified and the lost), his love and his wrath became particular and sectional: he loves one section of this divided race, and hates with moral righteousness the other section. One section is seen in Christ, and so is lovely; the other section is seen out of Christ as sinful, and so is hateful.

God's pity is universal, because all men are miserable; but his love is sectional, because only those who are foreseen to be in Christ are lovely. But pity does not help: pity only sheds tears, it does not rescue. Love, on the other hand, saves all its objects that it can. God does not save every man whom he pities, but he saves every man, without exception, whom he loves. He destroys all he hates. There are no trophies of his affection in hell; nothing which he desires is in that waste-heap.

Universal love logically leads to universal atonement, and through it to universal salvation. But to escape these legitimate consequences it is a favorite dodge of many to affirm that God loves the sinner, but hates his sin: love terminates upon the person, and hatred upon the sin. Sin and holiness, however, separated from persons are mere abstractions, and as such are the objects of neither hate nor love. Persons are the only objects of moral affections; the attributes of those persons make them the objects of love or hate. The elect are loved: their persons are the objects of the divine affection, and their relations to Jesus are the ground of that affection. The sinner is hated on account of his sin: his person is the object of divine wrath, and his sin is the reason for the divine displeasure. Penal suffering falls upon the object of God's wrath, and it is the person who experiences the suffering and not his abstract sin.

It is sometimes said that God must be just, but that he may be affectionate; that, while the exercise of righteousness is a necessity of his moral nature, the exercise of love is an option of his will. This general proposition must be received, if at all, with caution and discrimination. We must assume that God always sees truly and feels accurately: that things always appear to him as they really are. If, therefore, the qualities of any character are inherently lovely, the divine heart would energize towards them complacently, and if those qualities were truly ugly, the divine heart would energize towards them repulsively. To assume the contrary, would be to assume that God can disregard facts. Sin is, if anything, moral ugliness, and sinners are rendered thereby inherently repulsive. The problem, How can God be just, and yet justify the ungodly? has as its parallel this problem, How can God love himself, and yet love the sinner, which is the opposite of himself? The love of the one precludes the love of the other. But some sinners are loved by God, genuinely and gloriously loved by him—how can it be? The answer is, Election; they are foreseen in Christ Jesus, and as clothed with the beauty of his holiness.

Love and its counterpart, wrath, are not optional attributes of the divine nature, subject to the beck and call of his will;

else could God command himself to love what is hateful, and hate what is lovely. Whatever is lovely, God must spontaneously love, and whatever is hateful God must spontaneously hate. He is immutable. He cannot be quiescent and inactive when the good and holy are before his face. Nor can he contemplate sin and wickedness with mere passivity of heart; he must feel indignant and wrathful towards wickedness. He cannot make himself morally colorless by a decree of his will: he is a necessary being. All men are sinners; all are, therefore, ugly and unlovely. How, then, can he love any, if he feels truly? Only on the supposition that they are in Christ Jesus, and prophetically changed into the image of his moral beauty and loveliness. None but the elect in Christ can be the objects of the love of God. All the remainder of the race must be the objects of his moral wrath and righteous disgust.

3. The doctrine that God loves all men is not only un-Calvinistic and untheological, but unbiblical.

"God is angry with the wicked every day" (Psa. vii. 11). Then how can it be true that he loves the wicked every day?

"Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated" (Rom. ix. 13). Soften the word "hated" in any way imaginable, it still cannot be transmuted into "love," so as to put Jacob and Esau on the same footing before the divine heart.

"All their wickedness is in Gilgal: for there I hated them: for the wickedness of their doings I will drive them out of mine house, I will love them no more" (Hosea ix. 15). God hated these Ephraimites for their wickedness, withdrew his love from them, and drove them out of his house. It is a strange alchemy which can turn these expressions and actions into manifestations of "love."

There are some whom God has "given up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonor their own bodies between themselves" (Rom. i. 24). Does he love those Sodomites whom he has "given up"? Then what can men be, what can men do, to forfeit the love of God?

"The foolish shall not stand in thy sight: thou hatest all workers of iniquity. Thou shalt destroy them that speak leasing:

the Lord will abhor the bloody and deceitful man" (Psa. v. 5, 6). God loves all men: "the foolish" are men, "workers of iniquity" are men, "murderers" are "bloody" men, liars are "deceitful" men. Does God love them? Does he love those whom he "hates"? Does he desire those whom he "abhors"?

"Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them" (Gal. iii. 10). Shall we represent God as a being who "curses" any object of his love? Given the proposition that all men are the objects of his love, and it would seem to be morally impossible that he should "curse" a single one of them.

There are some men who have committed "the unpardonable sin," for whom we are not at liberty to pray. Does God love this class, and desire their salvation? We must answer in the affirmative if "all men," without exception, are the objects of his love and desire.

But the text, "God is love," is in the reader's mind. This passage can mean nothing more than that God possesses the attribute of "love"; it does not give a hint as to the "objects" of that love. To interpret it as the sentimentalists do, so as to represent "love" as the essence of God, is to portray the divine character as nerveless, and the divine being as an easy-going God, too sentimental and maudlin to maintain his own dignity and self-respect; incapable of anger and wrath and moral indignation. His very affections would render him incapable of smiting the ungodly and casting from him the unholy with loathing and disgust.

Then there are the famous words, "God so loved the world," which is the chief reliance for the doctrine that God loves all men. But what does the word "world" mean in this place? By it the Northern revisers mean "all mankind." But does it have this equivalency in the Scriptures?

The word "world" is employed in two senses in the Scriptures, (1) the "world" which is saved, (2) the "world" which is lost. "The Son of man came not to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved." Here the "world" is that which is not condemned, but saved. "Now is the judgment of this world; now is the prince of this world judged." Here the

"world" stands for that which is condemned, whose prince is cast out. There is a "world" for which Christ prays, and a "world" for which he does not pray; a "world" for which he died, and a "world" for which he did not die; a "world" which God loves, and a "world" which God does not love.

The old world and the new world: the one is the object of God's wrath, and the other is the object of his love and redemption. The old world is the one that now is; the new world is the one which comes out of the renovation of all things. The inhabitants of the old world are sinners; the inhabitants of the new world are the glorified saints only. Those who perish are the citizens of the old world; those who live are the citizens of the new world. It was this new world, as foreseen by God, to which he gave his love and his Son. This the "world he so loved." Perhaps there is not an instance in the Scripture where "world" is used exclusively for the "inhabitants of the earth."

II. The Northern Presbyterians have announced as an article of their revised and corrected faith the doctrine that God desires the salvation of all men.

The objects of this desire are all men: elect and non-elect, believers and unbelievers, sheep and goats. We are not told that he desires the salvation of one class more than he desires the salvation of the other class. We are left to infer that his desire is equal and indiscriminate. In one place the new language is, "His desire that all men should be saved," and in another place it runs, "The doctrine of God's eternal decree is held in harmony with the doctrine that God desires not the death of any sinner." He desires the salvation of "all men"; he desires not the death of "any sinner."

It is a truism of our theology that God does all he wants to do. "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure" (Isa. xlv. 10). "The pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hands" (Isa. liii. 10). "He doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?" (Dan. iv. 35). The actions of God are measured by his desires. He does all he wants to do; he does nothing which is out of harmony

with his desires. Then if God desires the salvation of "all men," all men will be saved.

We are all familiar with the old dilemma: "Either God could save all men, but will not; or he would save all men, but cannot. If he could save all men, but will not, then he is not all-loving. If he would save all men, but cannot, then he is not almighty." Take one horn of the dilemma, and you limit his love; take the other horn of the dilemma, and you limit his power. Universalists have ever stood upon the proposition: God can save all men and God will save all men; Calvinists have ever stood upon the premise: God can save all men, but he does not desire to save all men; Arminians have ever stood upon the platform: God would save all men, but cannot. One system limits his power; another system limits his desire; the first system limits neither his power nor his desire.

This new Calvinism of the Northern Presbyterians represents God as desiring the salvation of all men; it also denies that all men are actually saved. God's desires are larger than the results of his scheme of redemption. In the consummation he will have, therefore, an overplus of unsatisfied desire.

Is not unsatisfied desire the essence of unhappiness? To want what you cannot get is the secret of all misery. Deny love its object, deny desire its gratification, and you break the heart. The divine love is immutable, and the divine desire is unchangeable. If he loves a man once, he loves him forever; if he desires him once, he longs for him always. If all men are the objects of his love and desire, they are always the objects of his love and his desire. He is a pretemporal being. He changes not, therefore the sons of Jacob are not consumed. The doctrine of the new Confession would make God forever a mourner at the gates of hell!

If he desires the salvation of all men, what is to prevent him from gratifying himself? The Arminian has an answer: the human will. By it the universal desire of God is checked and denied its gratification. But the Northern Presbyterian can make no such reply. He has not revised his doctrine of the will. On the contrary, in his new chapter on the Holy Spirit, he says

the Holy Spirit "is the only efficient agent in the application of redemption." We have it then in this way: God wants to save all men; he can save all men; he saves all who are saved; no man can prevent him from gratifying his universal desire. Unrevised Calvinism had an answer for this perplexity: All men are not saved because God does not elect to save all men; does not desire to save all men; on the contrary, he desires the damnation of all those whom he passes by and leaves in their sin and guilt.

God does, as a matter of fact, consign some men to hell; the Northern Presbyterians admit it. But they now tell us that God "desires not the death of any sinner." We ask, How can God do anything which he does not desire to do? How can he act against himself and disappoint himself? It is not harsh to say that God abhors the wicked, has a moral aversion from them, and, considered apart from Christ, has a moral complacency in their punishment.

The high pressure exhortation, which runs in this way: God has done everything he can to save every sinner; God sincerely desires the salvation of every man, woman and child; it would break his great heart of love if any man is lost; you sinners have the mental peace and happiness of God in your hands—such preaching renders the divine being ridiculous, cheapens the gospel and composes the ungodly. It will be a day of apostasy when Presbyterians cease to preach that the sinner is in the hands of an angry God, and consoles him with the delusion that he is in the embrace of love.

III. The Northern Presbyterians have added to their Confession the doctrine of the universality of the atonement.

All that is necessary here is to prove the charge; every half-way Presbyterian knows that the doctrine of universal atonement will not coalesce with historic Calvinism.

In the Declaratory Statement, made as a foot-note to the chapter on the Decree of God, we have this language, "The doctrine of God's eternal decree is held in harmony with the doctrine of his love to all mankind, his gift of his Son to be the propitiation for the sins of the whole world, and his readiness to bestow his saving grace on all who seek it."

That the word "world" is here used as a synonym for "all mankind" is proved by the fact that in one of the clauses added we have the expression, "His love to the world," and in another clause we have the expression, "His love to all mankind." With the revisers, then, "world" means "all mankind." Then we have the doctrine that God gave his Son to be the propitiation for the sins of all mankind. It is true that the Apostle John uses this form of words, but the use which the Northern Presbyterians make of them is an interpretation. In the light of controversies over the extent of the atonement, and in the light of the context of the additions made to the Confession, the language of John has not been merely quoted; it has been interpreted, and interpreted to mean that Christ has made a propitiation for the sins of all mankind. There would have been no gain, no clarifying of doctrine, for the Northern Presbyterians to have quoted this debated text, without giving an explanation of it. The very purpose of its addition was to assert belief in the unlimited nature of the atonement. Whatever, therefore, this form of words may have meant as used by John, as used by Northern Presbyterians it means that Christ has propitiated God for all mankind. So explained it is a distinct surrender of old doctrine, and the addition of a new doctrine borrowed from the historic opponents of Calvinism.

In the chapter to which this explanatory foot-note has been added, we read, "Wherefore, they who are elected being fallen in Adam are redeemed by Christ. . . . Neither are any others redeemed by Christ." Now we are asked to hold, as harmonizing with this language, the following, "His gift of his Son to be the propitiation for the sins of the whole world." In another place in the unrevised text of the Confession we read, "The Lord Jesus . . . hath fully satisfied the justice of his Father, and purchased not only reconciliation, but an everlasting inheritance in the kingdom of heaven, for all those whom the Father hath given unto him." This language defines the confessional doctrine as to the nature of the atonement; "it fully satisfied the justice of his Father." It also defines the objects of that atonement: "all those whom the Father hath given unto him."

If then the new doctrine is consistent with the old, as to the nature of the atonement, we are now taught that Christ has fully satisfied the justice of his Father for the whole world. Atonement is "satisfaction," and the beneficiaries of that satisfaction are all mankind. If God is thus propitiated, placated, fully satisfied with respect to all mankind, there remains no more ground of complaint against any. It would seem that all are salvable.

The new theory of the atonement harmonizes neither with the old doctrine as to the extent of the atonement or as to the nature of the atonement.

The atonement is as wide as God's election, as wide as God's love, as wide as God's desire, as wide as the prayers of Christ, as wide as heaven, but no wider. Christ died for those who were given to him; he laid down his life for the "sheep"; he did not lay down that life for the "goats."

Let us not become frantic. The God of Calvinism is not some detestable monster. He is not some Jupiter Tonans fulminating out of Olympian darkness, for judgment and justice are the habitation of his throne. He is not some pitiless Shylock demanding his pound of flesh, for mercy and truth are met together, and righteousness and peace have kissed each other in his character. He is not some Moloch casting his children into the fire, for he saves every child he has, and will gather every son of his love into a blessed and fadeless heaven.

Neither is he a namby-pamby God, a character of easy-going good nature, in love with all sorts of men and women, desiring the companionship of all sorts of moral reprobates; too sentimental to feel moral indignation, too nerveless to smite what opposes his lofty purpose, too pulseless to defend his honor, too colorless to have a respectable moral character. Let us not sacrifice his reputation in order to commend him to sinners. Let us not reduce him to a mere goody-goody, in love with everybody, and longing for the salvation of every sinner, when he is conscious that he is the only being who can save any sinner. There are some people whom he loves and desires to have with him in glory, and he will bring the last one of these to his blissful courts above, and

there are some other people whom he detests, and he will sweep every one of them out of his presence in "the fierceness of his wrath."

The new premises of the Northern Presbyterians must work like leaven in the dough. The development must issue in the Hypothetical Universalism of the New Schoolman, or in the Contingent Universalism of the Arminian, or in the Absolute Universalism of the Universalist. God loves all men, God desires the salvation of all men, God has been propitiated towards all men; then, (1) all men must be saved, or (2) God must be checked in his love and desire by himself, or (3) he must be limited in his love and desire by the will of sinners. If he hinders himself by withholding his Spirit, then we shall have God prevailing against God. If he is hindered by the will of the sinner, then we have man prevailing against God. Neither can be: God does all his holy pleasure, and actually saves every man he loves, every human being whom he desires to save, every individual for whom Christ died.

The problem for the Northern Presbyterians is to show how a universal love, a universal desire and a universal atonement actually issue in a contracted and limited salvation. Who, but they, make heaven smaller than the heart of God, smaller than God desires it to be, smaller than the atonement of Christ?

The premises of unrevised Calvinism are, (1) God loves some men, (2) God desires the salvation of some men, (3) Christ made atonement for some men, (4) the Spirit effectually calls some men, (5) only some men are finally saved in heaven.

The Northern Presbyterians have wandered. Let the Southern Presbyterian Church preserve its identity. It may yet be "the color guard" around which the Calvinistic hosts may rally when weary of devious ways and confessional experiments.

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