

*[1954. The Word of God. The Southern Presbyterian Journal Sep. 29.]*

## The Word Of God

When the Reformers of the sixteenth century proposed to establish a church and order their own lives in a manner pleasing to God, they were forced to consider what God's requirements are. They needed a rule of faith and practice. In the Roman church tradition as well as the Scriptures was accepted as such a rule, and in actuality superseded and contradicted them. At the same time there were mystics and visionaries who claimed that God spoke to them directly. The rule of faith which the Reformers acknowledged was the Scriptures alone.

Their views were summarized in the Westminster Confession and Catechisms. Two quotations follow: Art. I, Sec. 10. "The supreme Judge, by which all controversies of religion are to be determined, and all decrees of councils, opinions of ancient writers, doctrines of men, and private spirits, are to be examined, and in whose sentence we are to rest, can be no other than the Holy Spirit speaking in the Scripture."

Shorter Catechism: "Q. 2. What rule hath God given to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy him?"

"A. The word of God, which is contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, is the only rule to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy him."

Since the Roman church still exists, and since there are still those who claim private guidance and revelation, the Westminster standards are as timely today as they ever were. Sermons and Sunday School lessons should constantly refer to them.

With the introduction of modernism into our churches in the nineteenth century and with the coming of neo-orthodoxy in the twentieth, an appearance of loyalty to the Bible and to the Confession has been attempted by emphasizing certain words in the standards, by failing to mention others, and by misinterpreting the whole. Thus unbelieving ministers made the double claim that they themselves accepted the Confession as originally intended, while the fundamentalists were inventing theories never before heard of.

Against the fundamentalists, who insisted on the inerrancy of the Bible, the modernists asserted that the Confession does not say that the Bible is inerrant. And neo-orthodoxy loudly insists that the word of God is found in the Bible, perhaps only in the Bible, but that not everything in the Bible is true. They

could even point to the catechism as quoted above. "Does it not say that the word of God is contained in the Scriptures? Somewhere, but not everywhere, between Genesis and Revelation, the word of God is to be found." This is their contention. But if now we wish to know whether or not this was the view of the Reformers, whether or not this is the position of the Presbyterian standards, and whether or not it is the teaching of the Scriptures themselves, which the standards summarize, we need only read other parts of the Confession. Quotations will not be multiplied here because the reader should examine the Confession for himself.

Article I, Section 1, says that at sundry times the Lord revealed his will to the prophets; afterwards, for the better preserving of the truth, it pleased the Lord to commit these revelations wholly unto writing. In this committal, may we ask, did it please the Lord to mix in some error with the truth he intended to preserve?

Section 4 says that the authority for which the Scriptures should be believed depends wholly on God, who is truth itself and the author of the books; therefore the sixty-six books itemized in Section 2 are to be received because they are the word of God. Here it is to be noted that the authority of God attaches to all the Scriptures, not to a part only. Scripture has been defined as the sixty-six books, and God is declared to be the author of them all. God is truth itself, and the Scripture not merely contains but is the word of God.

Section 5 even uses the word infallible. It says that our full assurance of the infallible truth and divine authority of these books is the work of the Holy Spirit. Can there be error in infallible truth?

To the same end Section 9 teaches that the infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture is the Scripture itself.

Can it now be maintained that the Presbyterian standards admit the existence of error, of mistakes, of false teaching in the Bible? And if not, what can be thought of Presbyterian ministers who do not believe in the full truthfulness of the Scriptures? Though they may believe that the word of God is to be found somewhere in the Bible, and perhaps only in the Bible, yet what can their ordination vows have meant to them, if they reject the very basis on which all the remainder of the Confession rests?

For those of us who believe the Bible, the Confession can supply an invaluable introduction to its main doctrines. Growth in grace will follow upon a careful study of the Confession as we compare its statements with the Biblical passages which it combines and summarizes. Let us not neglect this excellent document.

*[1954. Creeds. The Southern Presbyterian Journal Oct. 6.]*

## Creeds

Today many church leaders consider creeds as obstacles to ecumenical union. It would please such men to hand over the discussions of credal differences to those impractical fuddy-duddies, the theologians, while they themselves made the important organizational arrangements by which the right people would get the prominent positions.

Besides these ecumaniacs there are other more humble people who sincerely believe that the adoption of a creed is an act of ecclesiastical presumption. Therefore several denominations have no creed. Then there are others who regard creeds, not as necessarily presumptuous, but as unnecessary. This would be the attitude of those who, though their zeal is unquestioned, find creeds intellectually heavy.

An evangelist I heard a year ago seems to be an instance of both these latter types. In his appeal to the unsaved he said that first they must repent, then they must have faith in Christ, and finally they must be born again. Since his denomination has no creed, no rule of his church forbids him to preach in this way. But had he been a Presbyterian, he would have been sailing under false colors, for I take it that no intelligent and honest Presbyterian would preach that faith and repentance precede regeneration.

However, it is to be feared that not all Presbyterians are both intelligent and honest. There are those who regard the Westminster Confession as a meaningless form to which lip service is paid at ordination. In the Presbyterian Church in the U.S. A. on several occasions candidates for the ministry, when examined by Presbytery, have doubted or denied the Virgin Birth, the Resurrection, the existence of Satan and hell—not to mention effectual calling and the perseverance of the saints—and yet the Presbytery voted to ordain them, and they professed in words their adherence to the Confession they had just contradicted.

No one compels a young man to become a Presbyterian minister. It is a voluntary choice. Therefore honesty seems to require that he be loyal to the flag he has chosen, or rather that he choose a flag to which he can be conscientiously loyal. If he does not believe the Confession, why should he solemnly affirm that he does? Similarly, if an older minister changes his views and comes to disagree with his ordination vows, no one compels him to remain in the denomination. Rather honesty compels him to find a church with which he agrees. How can God be expected to bless perjury and hypocrisy in the pulpit?

The Westminster Confession was never intended to be either an empty form or an obstacle to church union. With the other reformed creeds, the Thirty-Nine Articles, the Heidelberg Catechism, the Canons of the Synod of Dort, it was a statement of what all the ministers earnestly believed and faithfully preached. These creeds were bonds of union, not causes of discord. Discord comes when men of opposing views subscribe to the same verbal formula. But the creeds were never intended to hide differences behind a veil of meaningless words. On the contrary, the year before St. Bartholomew's massacre Bishop Jewel of the Anglican church wrote to Peter Martyr on the continent, "As to matters of doctrine we do not differ from you by a nail's breadth."

When the reformers attempted to sweep away the immorality, the idolatry, and the superstition of the Roman church, their first task was to discover precisely what the Bible taught. The creeds they wrote are the summaries of the main Biblical themes. And the culmination of this effort, benefiting by over a century of cooperative study, is the greatest of all the creeds, the Westminster Confession.

The creed then is a statement of what the church must teach. It is the flag the church flies. It states the purpose for which the church exists. Lip service to the creed is dishonest. Diminishing its message is unfaithfulness. Scripture says more than the creed says, and this more must be preached too; but the creed summarizes the most important Biblical teachings, and these must receive the emphasis. The Bible is the word of God who cannot lie. When his truth is vigorously and fully proclaimed, we may expect his blessing upon it.

## Knowledge and Ignorance

On one occasion I gave a series of (supposedly popular) theological lectures for the congregation of a brother minister. After one service when most of the people had gone home, one of the women with the pastor remained for conversation. Going beyond the limits of the lecture I continued by arguing that the phrase, "He descended into hell," might well be omitted from the Apostle's Creed. True, I had no conscientious reason for not using it, for Christ did indeed suffer the pains of hell for our redemption. But because of the real danger of fanciful interpretation of I Peter 3:19, I thought the omission might be wise. The woman resisted this line of argument with a determination that at first puzzled me. I finally came to understand when she very politely undertook to give me a gentle rebuke. When a group of the most learned and devout Christian scholars, she said, give careful consideration to the formulation of a Creed, it borders on rashness to attempt alterations.

The woman's statement is highly commendable, particularly in the present century when creeds are held in little honor. But unfortunately this woman did not know that the Apostle's Creed was not the result of learned discussions, as was the Nicene Creed, and that from the earliest times to the present it has been recited in different forms. On this point the woman was unfortunately ignorant.

To most people such ignorance will appear to be a matter of little importance. "It will not cause the woman to lead an evil life; there is little danger that she will come to believe in purgatory; and even if she entertains fanciful interpretations of I Peter 3:19, what harm will it do?"

Now it must be granted that the illustration gives a rather minor instance of ignorance. It is hard to imagine any great harm resulting from the lack of this one piece of information. On the other hand, do we not all admit that, in general, ignorance is undesirable? And is it not possible that the lack of several pieces of information, even if each by itself is minor, could result in a moderate amount of harm?

Let us choose another illustration. Not long after the conversation with that woman, I was studying the relation of the church to the state. It is an important problem. Now, of course, I am not as other men, or even as this ignorant woman; I study twice in the week, and give attention to all the books I possess; and this I have done from my youth up. But when I read Aaron's Rod Blossoming by George Gillespie, and some other works by that remarkable young man, I could only lower my eyes from heaven to earth, smite on my breast, and cry, God be merciful to me an ignoramus.

The course of church history, like the charts of the stock market, has its peaks and depressions. After the deep abyss of Romish ignorance and superstition there came a great discovery of God's truth in the sixteenth century. At an astounding rate new knowledge of the divine revelation was discovered by the leaders and taught to the populace. The culmination of those times of refreshing is enshrined in the Westminster Confession. But since then there has been a fairly steady process of forgetting. What in that day was a compendium for children, the Shorter Catechism, is today more than ample for a seminary graduate requesting ordination of Presbytery. And is there any twentieth century Jenny Geddes ready to throw her stool at some prominent neo-orthodox moderator? Does our present day Mrs. Geddes know what neo-orthodoxy is? For that matter, does she know what orthodoxy is?

From the time of the apostles to the present moment, there has been no revival of true religion remotely approaching the Protestant Reformation. The conspicuous difference between that age and all others is the amount of Biblical information. Even in the Middle Ages there must have been, and in modern times too there undoubtedly are, men of zeal, humility, and devotion. But the Reformers knew the Scripture in great detail and understood its implications. They took great pains to teach exactly what God had revealed. Would not a rediscovery of this truth today produce results similar to those of the Reformation? And what survey of Biblical teaching is a better guide than the Westminster Confession?

Did you say that you have never read it? Then get a copy immediately.

[1954. *The Trinity. The Southern Presbyterian Journal Oct. 20.*]

## The Trinity

In the ecclesiastical controversies of this decade little reference is ever made to Chapter II of the Westminster Confession. Is this because the Trinity is a dead letter? Or does it indicate unanimous acceptance? Or does the controversy merely seem to leave the matter untouched, while in reality the doctrine of the Trinity is very much involved?

To some people in some churches the Trinity is a dead letter. The hymn book of one denomination has rewritten "Holy, Holy, Holy," so as to exclude all reference to "God in Three Persons, Blessed Trinity." A defense that is offered for such disconcerting editing is that the doctrine of the Trinity is based more on pagan Greek philosophy than on the Scriptures. But such a defense can be credited only by those who are ignorant of the extensive Scriptural arguments in the writings of Athanasius. Some ignorance of Greek philosophy also helps.

Can it be said then that in the Presbyterian church, whatever may be the case with other denominations, the second chapter of the Confession is unanimously accepted? Before this question can be answered in the hoped-for affirmative, a distinction should be made between the first two sections of the chapter and the third. Only in this last are the Trinitarian distinctions mentioned. The first two sections describe a basic monotheism, which, with many proof texts from the Old Testament, could be largely and perhaps altogether accepted by a devout Jew. As a summary of the Biblical teaching concerning God's attributes, His righteousness, His glory, His knowledge, His sovereignty, these two sections form an excellent guide for Bible study. Though their wording was framed in the seventeenth century they will never become a dead letter for believers in the one true and living God.

The trinitarian third section is very short. In fact, those who wish to rewrite the creeds would do better to consider expanding here rather than contracting anywhere. The doctrine of the Trinity centers in the deity of Christ. The personality of the Spirit and the relations among the Persons are included, but surely it is not incorrect to say that the deity of Christ forms the center.

Can it be said now that present controversies in Presbyterian churches do not call the deity of Christ into question. Presbyterian ministers have denied the inerrancy of Scripture; some of them refuse to affirm the Virgin Birth; some deny that Christ "arose from the dead with the same body in which He suffered" (Conf. VIII iv); but do not all Presbyterian ministers believe in the deity of Christ?

The paragraph above asks two questions, which may appear to be the same, but which are not. The second question is, Do all Presbyterian ministers accept the deity of Christ? In answer it may be said that there is little evidence to prove even a few cases of unbelief at this important point. In view of the doctrinal laxity of our age it would not be surprising if some Presbyterian ministers repudiated Christ. Some might even be atheists or communists. Of course they would have been hypocrites and perjurers at their ordination, but this is quite possible, for the Presbyterian ministry would be a very valuable vantage point for a communist. But there is little evidence of any widespread rejection of Christ's deity.

However, it would be wrong to infer, in answer to the first question, that the present doctrinal laxity, the controversies over union, the ecumenical obsession, and all the ferment of our age, leave the deity of Christ untouched and do not call it into question.

An attack against a citadel is not always frontal. Sometimes the outer defenses are first put out of commission, one by one; sometimes the foundations are undermined; sometimes the supplies are cut off. This is not to suggest that any of those who differ with us on matters of union intend to weaken their testimony to the deity of Christ. It does not even imply that all those who deny the Virgin Birth are conscious enemies of trinitarianism. The ecclesiastical situation is similar to the political, where many Americans have advocated this or that part of communistic propaganda without knowing its source and aims.

But put the question this way: if the Virgin Birth is not an historical event, and if the body of Christ did not come out of the tomb, and if the Scriptures are often in error, and if, in comparison with the organization of a super-church, all of these doctrinal matters are insignificant, what hope is there of long maintaining the deity of Christ? Let those answer who have been trying to satisfy themselves with a minimum of Christian doctrine. The rest of us will nourish our souls with the help of the complete Confession, all thirty-three chapters of it.

*[1954. A Hard Saying. The Southern Presbyterian Journal Oct. 27.]*

## A Hard Saying

Times of great religious awakening are characterized by a zeal to understand God's word. People study the Bible. Not only are its obvious teachings scanned, but its deeper doctrines are carefully examined. However, when the love of many waxes cold, and when unbelief comes in like a flood, the discouraged faithful are satisfied to defend a few vital doctrines. Sometimes it is even said that Christians ought not to go too deeply into the Scriptures. It is presumptuous, useless, and divisive.

Such an attitude is not commended in the Scriptures themselves, nor was it the practice of the reformers and Westminster divines. The Bible says that all Scripture is profitable for doctrine, not just some. And the reformers did not draw back from the difficult passages on predestination, foreordination, and God's eternal decrees. Really, these passages are not difficult to understand, though many people find them difficult to believe. But if they are God's words, then we should study, believe, and preach them.

The Westminster Confession, summarizing the Bible, asserts in Chapter III that God from all eternity did ordain whatsoever comes to pass. Obviously, if God is omnipotent, if nothing can thwart his will, and if he decided to make a world, then all his creatures and all their actions must be according to his plan.

This is easy to understand, but many people find it difficult to believe that God planned to have sin in the world. Does Chapter III of the Confession mean that God commits sin? And even in the case of a man's doing something good, does it mean that God makes the man do the good act while the man willed to do something evil? These questions have perplexed many minds, but the first question is, What does the Bible say? If the Bible talks about foreordination, we have no right to avoid it and keep silent.

Summarizing the Scriptures, the Confession says here that God is not the author of sin; that is, God does nothing sinful. Even those Christians who are not Calvinists must admit that God in some sense is the cause of sin, for he is the sole ultimate cause of everything. But God does not commit the sinful act, nor does he approve of it and reward it. Perhaps this illustration is faulty, as most illustrations are, but consider that God is the cause of my writing this little article. Who could deny that God is the first or ultimate cause, since it was he who created mankind? But although God is the cause of this article, he is not its author. It would be much better, if he were.

Still more difficult for many people to believe is the third section. It says, "By the decree of God, for the manifestation of his glory, some men and angels are predestinated unto everlasting life, and others foreordained to everlasting death." And the next section adds that the number of each of these two classes is so certain and definite that it cannot be either increased or diminished.

Easy to understand; difficult to believe? But the main question is, Do the Scriptures teach this? If they do, as every ordained Presbyterian minister has affirmed, and as the proof-texts amply show, then the doctrine should be taught. But if the Scriptures do not teach this, and if predestination is false, what becomes of our assurance of salvation and the perseverance of the saints? If God has not from all eternity decided to preserve me in grace, do I have any spiritual power in myself to persevere to the end? And if I have such power, would not salvation be achieved through my own efforts and by my own merits, rather than by God's grace?

This doctrine of the eternal decree underlies, not only the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints, but also that of effectual calling, the necessity and nature of regeneration, the gift of saving faith, and in short the whole gospel.

In the United States not much has been heard in recent years about the sovereignty of God. In England there is an association called the Sovereign Grace Union, dedicated to the purpose of proclaiming salvation by grace, one hundred per cent grace, the grace of God, apart from all human merit. No doubt loyal Presbyterians believe in sovereign grace too, after a fashion; but would it not be better if we dusted off our Confessions, used them as a guide in our Bible study, and then proclaimed the message with heavenly enthusiasm?

*[1954. Providence. The Southern Presbyterian Journal Nov. 3.]*

## Providence

The authors of the Westminster Confession compressed the doctrine of the Trinity into one section of five lines; but when they came to God's control over all his creatures and all their actions, they wrote two fairly lengthy chapters. The eight sections of Chapter III outline the Bible's teaching on predestination to life and foreordination to death, so that those who sincerely obey the Gospel may praise God in humility and be assured of their eternal election from the certainty of their effectual calling. Chapter V differs in that predestination is more specific and providence is more general, and also in that it considers God's controlling power during the course of history rather than his eternal plan itself.

The devout scholars who made these chapters so long must have done so under the belief, a belief amply justified, that the Bible has a great deal to say about God's sovereignty and that it is all important. Calvinism proportions its emphases to those of the Bible.

Not all Christians are Calvinists; some do not believe that "all things come to pass immutably and infallibly;" they wish to reserve some sphere in which man can be independent of God. It must not be supposed that these people are therefore lacking in sincerity and devotion or that they are outside the fold of Christ. But such is the clarity of the Bible in its teaching on God's sovereignty that Presbyterians cannot convince themselves that such people have a sufficient understanding to discharge the responsibilities of an ecclesiastical office. They stand in need of further instruction. They should study the proof texts cited by the Confession.

For example: "He doeth according to his will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand." (Dan. 4:35) "Whatsoever the Lord pleased, that did he" (Psa. 135:6). "Being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will" (Eph. 1:11). And many other verses.

Because the doctrines of predestination and providence are sometimes misunderstood, the Calvinists, when they explain these doctrines, regularly try to absolve them of the charge of fatalism. Then too, because the words predestination, foreordination, and election are indisputably in the Bible, the non-Calvinists also try to rid the Bible of any appearance of fatalism. All of the latter and even some of the former succeed better in removing the predestination than the fatalism.

There is a technical and there is a popular view of fatalism. Scientists and philosophers are tempted to deny that the universe has a purpose. Natural processes seem not to be directed to any foreseen end. Such is the view of Spinoza, Bertrand Russell, and others. Obviously this is exactly the opposite of the Biblical doctrine of Providence. God sees the end from the beginning and controls all his creatures and all their actions so as to guarantee the planned result. In this sense the Bible is not fatalistic. A less scientific and more popular view of fatalism is that man should sit quietly by and do nothing to avert the tragedies which threaten him. Not very many people are tempted to believe such a theory. It is not much of a danger to Christianity. But if a few are so tempted, they can easily see that the Bible commands us to do various things. Adam was commanded to subdue nature to his needs. Abraham was commanded to leave his home. Christ, who was delivered up by the determinate counsel of God, went deliberately to his death. None of these sat idly by.

Now, no one denies that the Bible contains these commands and these actions. The Bible also teaches predestination and election. If a person is puzzled and thinks these two facts constitute an inconsistency, a puzzle, or a paradox, he ought at least to admit that the Bible so teaches. Therefore he ought to preach both and slight neither. Unfortunately his bewilderment is likely to reduce the force of his preaching.

But it is not necessary to remain bewildered. This is not to say that a man can become omniscient and solve all the problems with which he may be confronted. It does mean, however, that the Bible itself, all of which is profitable for doctrine, contains enough information to show that action and volition by man are not inconsistent with foreordination by God. God decreed the peculiar status of the Jews, and he decreed to bring it about by Abraham's journey to Palestine. God decreed that Joseph would be sold as a slave in Egypt in order to preserve the family from famine. God decreed the death of Christ from before the foundation of the world, and therefore Christ steadfastly set His face toward Jerusalem. It was by means of, not in spite of, these volitions and actions that God had determined to accomplish his purpose.

The Christian should always remember that God is the potter and man is the clay; of the same lump God can make a vessel of honor and a vessel of dishonor. The Christian should also remember that God works in us, of His own good pleasure, both to will and to do. So remembering, the Christian will be a Calvinist and will praise God that his servants at Westminster constructed our Confession as a standard against error and as a bulwark of truth.

[1954. Creation. *The Southern Presbyterian Journal* Nov. 10.]

## Creation

In opposition to pantheism and naturalism, Chapter IV of the Westminster Confession gives the Biblical teaching on creation. "It pleased God... for the manifestation of the glory of his eternal power, wisdom, and goodness, in the beginning to create, or make of nothing, the world and all things therein..."

Secular or pagan thought has regularly denied that the world had a first moment and that it began suddenly. Recently, the eminent physicist, Professor George Gamow, in his book *The Birth and Death of the Sun*, said that "the elements were formed in not more than half an hour." This is interesting in that its admission of a sudden unique event contrasts with previous views of a slow, gradual, evolutionary uniformity; but it can hardly be said that Dr. Gamow has proved the truth of the Biblical account.

That the Bible is not a book on science is often given as an excuse for its many alleged mistakes. The assumption seems to be that science books do not make mistakes. But over the centuries scientific theories have come and gone. Even in the last half century physics has been almost completely altered. Professor Gamow has a new theory and his successor will have another. Of course, the Bible is not a science textbook, but when it mentions natural phenomena, it speaks the truth.

Destructive Biblical critics have proposed to translate Gen. 1:1, "When God began to make the heavens and the earth." This wording obscures the idea of a sudden act and a creation out of nothing. It should be noted, however, that the Hebrew verb, *Bara*, in the form or "voice" used in Gen. 1:1, never refers to human productions. Even the other "voices" in which a human subject cuts down a tree or kills an enemy are extremely rare. Verbs of doing and making occur hundreds of times in the Old Testament, but this verb with a human subject occurs less than five times. Its characteristic use is to express divine production.

That God created out of nothing is seen negatively by the absence of any mention of a preexisting matter, and positively by the all embracing extent of the sphere of creation. God is said to have created all things: Neh. 9:6; Col. 1:16; Rev. 4:11. The expressions are so universal that no possibility remains for anything uncreated.

The most important part of creation was the creation of man. The heavens and the earth, grand as they

are, are, as it were, nothing but the stage setting for the actors in the Divine Comedy. Therefore God created man alone in his own image; that is, he made man a rational and moral creature. By his sovereign power God wrote the moral law on man's heart and added a special revelation, permitting man to eat of other trees, but forbidding him to eat of one.

Such was the skill of the Westminster divines that they were able to outline these marvelous themes in less than 150 words. In two short paragraphs they summarized the main burden of the Bible on this point. A Presbyterian ministry that fails to preach these Westminster doctrines would be unfaithful to its ordination vows; and any other ministry or any communicant member who neglects the Confession is thereby deprived of the best brief guidebook to an understanding of the Bible.

*[1954. Healthy, Sick, or Dead? The Southern Presbyterian Journal Nov. 17. Published in [Essays on Ethics and Politics 1992].]*

## Healthy, Sick, or Dead?

In these times when religious periodicals are so full of politics and so empty of Biblical exposition, the ignorance of the people is so great that every doctrine of the Westminster Confession needs vigorous proclamation. As we look at the doctrine of sin in Chapter VI, it is hard to avoid thinking that it needs even a more vigorous presentation than the others. This natural reaction may be exaggerated, but the chapter surely contains a wealth of material pertinent for our careless age.

Chapter IV had said that man was created righteous; the present chapter adds that our first parents sinned, and "by this sin they fell from their original righteousness, and communion with God, and so became dead in sin, and wholly defiled in all the faculties and parts of soul and body."

Roman Catholicism holds that man was not created positively righteous, but, rather, neutral; after his creation God gave him an extra gift of righteousness; and when Adam sinned, he lost the extra gift and fell back to the neutral state in which he was created. Thus man's present condition, according to Romanism, is not too bad. The Bible and the Confession say that man fell far below the estate in which he was created and is now wholly defiled in all his faculties and parts. The modernists have a better opinion of themselves than even the Romanists have. If the race fell at all, it was an upward evolutionary fall; and man has been making rapid progress ever since. Herbert Spencer set the norm for much modernistic preaching in his prediction that the little evil remaining on earth would vanish in a short time. Books were written about moral man in an immoral society that needed only a good dose of socialism to become Utopian. Ministers dilated on human perfectibility. And in the summer of 1914 a college president and Presbyterian elder had almost finished a book to prove there would be no more war. He had forgotten what Christ said. Now, forty years later, two world wars and the brutality of totalitarian governments have shaken the confidence of this type of muddleheadedness.

The neo-orthodox are now ready to admit that something is wrong with man. But do they agree with the Bible as to what this something is? Does their obscure mixture of a few Biblical phrases and a great deal of esoteric terminology mean that man is dead in sin, "utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil"? One thing is clear: the neo-orthodox deny that the guilt of Adam's sin was imputed to his posterity. Adam was not our representative in his trial before God. Indeed, Adam is only an unhistorical myth. And yet these men have had the effrontery to claim that they, rather than we, preserve the position of the Reformers,

Let them read the Confession.

We too should read the Confession. And we should preach it with vigor. Not only have Romanists, modernists, and neo-orthodox departed from the teachings of the Bible, but there are also others, who in spite of professing to adhere to the Scripture, have diverged, sometimes widely, from the truth.

There was a Bible professor in a Christian college who taught that man was a sinner, man was in a bad way, man was sick in sin. Now, salvation, so this Bible professor explained it, is like medicine in the drug store; and the sick man ought to drag himself to the store and get the medicine, and be cured. There was also a convinced Presbyterian on this faculty, who taught in accordance with the Westminster Confession. So evident to the students was the contrast between these two theologies that the President disconnected the Presbyterian from his post.

The Bible and the Confession teach that man is not just sick in sin; he is dead in sin; and salvation rather than being compared with medicine is compared with a resurrection.

Another form of minimizing sin is the belief that sinless perfection is possible in this life. The Confession says, "This corruption of nature, during this life, doth remain in those that are regenerated; and although it be through Christ pardoned and mortified, yet both itself, and all the motions thereof, are truly and properly sin."

The error of the "holiness" groups is similar to the Romanist and modernist error in that it is a failure to recognize the exceeding sinfulness of sin. To them, sin seems rather superficial, and therefore it can be eradicated in this life. They sometimes restrict sin to "known sin." But if the aim of the Christian life is merely to avoid known sin, then the more ignorant of the law we are, the more righteous we would be.

Yet for all their sinless perfection, these are the people who hold that one can lose one's salvation and become unregenerate a second time. This shows that the Scriptural view of sin, so accurately summarized in the Confession, has far reaching implications. Its force is seen in the nature of salvation, the perseverance of the saints, the varieties of free will, the imputation of Christ's righteousness, and in fact throughout the whole system. Nor should we be satisfied with knowing only a part. We need the complete Confession.

*[1954. The Covenant. The Southern Presbyterian Journal Nov. 24.]*

## The Covenant

Since God is Truth, and since Christ is the Logos, Wisdom, or Reason of God, one naturally expects that the contents of revelation would form a system. This expectation is not disappointed. The various doctrines of the Bible dovetail and fit into each other. A later part explains more fully the implications of an earlier part. For this reason a given chapter of the Westminster Confession is understood more clearly when it is compared with others. Predestination and Providence were closely related; the chapter on the fall of man lays the foundation for the doctrine of the atonement, effectual calling, and sanctification.

But perhaps Chapter VII on the Covenant suffers most in the absence of comparison with later chapters. And even after comparison, its implications are less clearly noticed than in the other instances, though they are not less but rather more pervasive.

There are two covenants, but for want of space the first can be only briefly mentioned. This is the covenant of works. God promised Adam, and in Adam his posterity, eternal life upon condition of perfect obedience. When Adam violated the terms of this covenant, God made a second, the Covenant of Grace. This Covenant offers eternal life to transgressors through the work of Jesus Christ. In it God promises to give His Holy Spirit to all the elect so as to make them willing and able to believe.

"This covenant was differently administered in the time of the law and in the time of the gospel; under the law it was administered by promises, prophecies, sacrifices, circumcision... all foreshadowing Christ to come, which were for that time sufficient and efficacious...; and is called the Old Testament. Under the gospel, when Christ the substance was exhibited, the ordinances in which this covenant is dispensed are the preaching of the Word, and the administration of the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper...; and is called the New Testament. There are not therefore two covenants of grace differing in substance, but one and the same under various dispensations."

It is in these words that the Confession states the relationship between the two Testaments or Covenants. The two parts of the Bible are not two covenants differing in substance or effect, but they are different administrations of the one Covenant of Grace. For this reason one must not suppose that Christ and the Holy Spirit are absent from the Old Testament. Remember that Christ said, "Abraham rejoiced to see my day." Paul in Gal. 3:8 says that the Gospel was preached to Abraham; and in I Cor. 10:4 we find that the rock in the wilderness was Christ. Regeneration, the work of the Holy Spirit, is

pictured as clearly in Ezekiel 36:26 as it is in the third chapter of John.

In contrast with a certain modern error the Westminster doctrine should be insisted upon that since the fall there has been only one method of salvation. Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Peter, Paul, and you and I are saved only through the merits of Christ. Neither conscience nor the law nor anything else has the power to redeem a sinner.

Above it was said that the implications of the doctrine of the Covenant are not always so clear, though they are pervasive. Only one further example can be given here. Chapter XXVIII of the Confession treats of Baptism. Now, the Presbyterian view of Baptism depends more on the doctrine of the Covenant than on anything else. As the Old Testament Passover became the Lord's Supper, so the Old Testament circumcision became the New Testament baptism. Those who deny the legitimacy of infant baptism on the ground that there is no specific command to that effect in the New Testament are embarrassed when asked for a specific New Testament command to admit women to the Lord's Supper. Specific New Testament commands are not absolutely necessary when the Old Testament has spoken with sufficient clarity. Such objections to infant baptism are based on a wrong conception of the relation of the two Testaments, a denial of covenant theology, and a neglect of the Westminster Confession. The remedy is obvious.

*[1954. Christ the Mediator. The Southern Presbyterian Journal Dec. 1. ]*

## Christ the Mediator

When we consider how people ignore the laws of God and transgress his commandments without concern, it seems that the doctrine of sin, summarized in Chapter VI of the Confession, must be the most important doctrine of all. And until people acknowledge that their lives offend God, presumably this doctrine is indeed the most important in a practical approach. But when sin is recognized as such, then it will seem that Chapter VIII, which outlines the remedy for sin, is the most important.

Of course, this feeling that one doctrine or one chapter is the most important is purely psychological, momentary, and relative to a particular purpose. One might as well ask which wheel or tire of an auto is the most important. Presumably it is the tire that is about to run over a tack. Otherwise they are all equally important. This is true of the chapters of the Confession because they fit together as a system and are not haphazard and disjointed. It was previously pointed out in one of these articles that the doctrines of predestination and providence underlie effectual calling and perseverance of the saints; the covenant bears on New Testament baptism; and of course the fall of man necessitates a Redeemer and Mediator. They all fit together.

Chapter VIII is longer than most. It contains a wealth of material. First, the work of Christ is referred to the eternal purpose of God. This work is then divided into the functions of prophet, priest, and king. Two lines further, it is stated that the Father from all eternity gave to his only Son "a people to be his seed, and to be by him in time redeemed, called, justified, sanctified, and glorified." This divine truth, so frequently mentioned in the Gospel of John, seems to have been slighted in contemporary preaching. Whether this is so or not, the ministers and the people can determine by trying to recollect the last sermon on the subject.

The second section of this chapter mentions the deity and the humanity of Christ, the two natures in one person. And though this recalls dim memories of ancient Chalcedon, it is equally important today. If Christ were a mere man, he could not function as a mediator; nor could he if he were simply God. In both cases he would be confined to one extreme and fail to link the two. If Christ were neither God nor man, but an angel or something, he would be a barrier between God and man rather than a mediator. But as both God and man, as truly God as man and as truly man as God, Christ can be the Mediator and unite God and men.

The Virgin Birth, the life of humiliation, the pain of crucifixion, the resurrection of the same body in

which he suffered, the ascension, and his return to judge men and angels at the end of the world, are all essential; but here they can only be listed.

Of supreme importance (everything is of supreme importance) is the significance of Christ's crucifixion. By his death, says Section V, Christ "fully satisfied the justice of his Father, and purchased not only reconciliation, but an everlasting inheritance... for all those whom the Father hath given him." The central point of the Christian message, the point which every faithful evangelist must emphasize, the first point that a Christian should understand about salvation is that Christ's death satisfies divine justice. Today it is customary to call this the doctrine of the Atonement; but it used to be called the Satisfaction, and Satisfaction is rather the better name.

When Christians are asked what is their favorite passage, they cite John 3:16 or the twenty-third Psalm, or a portion of Isaiah. And no one can fail to appreciate the beauty of these passages. But if a malevolent demon were to deprive the world of the Bible, and to me was given the heavy responsibility of preserving just a few lines for posterity, I would unhesitatingly pass by the twenty-third Psalm, the beautiful portions of Isaiah, and even John 3:16. I would select Romans 3:25-26. These Pauline verses do not have the beauty of the Psalms, nor the majestic style of Isaiah, nor the emotional appeal of John 3:16; but they have the heart of the gospel, they explain precisely what Christ did in his death, they show the method of salvation.

Other matters in Chapter VIII must be omitted in order to mention the final section that guarantees that Christ did not die in vain. "To all those for whom Christ hath purchased redemption, he doth certainly and effectively apply and communicate the same." As Isaiah said, "He shall see of the travail of his soul and shall be satisfied." And as Christ himself said, "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me." Thus we are assured that no one for whom Christ died will be lost.

Many times I have preached in rescue missions. Looking at these half drunken derelicts, these miserable victims of gross sin, one could wonder whether it was any use to preach to them. How can their perverted minds be expected to respond to a Christian sermon? Certainly no natural ground of expectation is possible. But if any of these gutter bums has been given to Christ by the Father, Christ doth effectually communicate redemption to him, "effectually persuading them by his Spirit to believe and obey," or as was stated in Chapter VII iii on the Covenant, giving them "his Holy Spirit to make them willing and able to believe."

Therefore the preacher need not be discouraged, for God has promised that "my word shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." (Isaiah too has some passages worth preserving.)

*[1954. Justification. The Southern Presbyterian Journal Dec. 8. ]*

## Justification

Do you expect to go to heaven when you die? Virtually everybody does. If you should ask a dozen different people why they expect to go to heaven, what answers do you think they would give? A Lutheran girl told me that she had behaved commendably through life and so she was sure she would go to heaven. (Luther would never have given that answer.) A doctor of no particular denomination said that although he had done a few bad things, he had done a great deal of good, and so he expected to go to heaven. And a utility repair man guessed that the Church would get him through. But these answers bring to mind the negro spiritual: "Everybody talking 'bout heaven ain't going there."

If you were an elder of a Presbyterian session, and an applicant for communicant membership gave some such answer, would you vote to receive him?

In general there are only two plans of salvation. The first plan has several varieties, but basically it is a purely human plan of salvation by works. Its sole drawback is that the works do not work. Heaven's requirements are too stringent, and we cannot make the grade. The second plan is the divine plan of justification by faith. Let us see how the Confession summarizes the Biblical teaching.

"Those whom God effectually calleth he also freely justifieth; not by infusing righteousness into them, but by pardoning their sins, and by accounting and accepting their persons as righteous: not for anything wrought in them or done by them, but for Christ's sake alone; not by imputing faith itself, the act of believing, or any other evangelical obedience, to them as their righteousness; but by imputing the obedience and satisfaction of Christ unto them, they receiving and resting on him and his righteousness by faith: which faith they have not of themselves; it is the gift of God."

In the United States, though not in South America, Spain, and Greece, we are no longer persecuted for preaching this doctrine. But we and it are ridiculed. The imputation of our guilt to Christ and of his righteousness to us, together with his satisfying divine justice, is disparaged and belittled as a mere legal and commercial transaction. Something repulsive is supposed to attach to a "merely legal" atonement. Would an illegal atonement be more attractive? What is really repulsive about this doctrine is its view of man as a depraved sinner and of salvation as altogether by God's grace. Sinful men hate the doctrine because it reveals their sin; proud men hate it because it prevents them from earning heaven by their own merits. But repentant and humble sinners gladly accept God's gift.

If justification, acquittal, pardon, and acceptance were the last words of the Confession and of Calvinism, there might indeed be a serious objection. Someone has parodied a gospel song so as to make it say,

"Free from the law, O blessed condition, I can sin as I please and still have remission."

And in the time of the Apostle Paul, objectors argued that justification by faith alone encouraged men to sin. That they raised this objection in Paul's day shows clearly that Paul did not teach justification by works. But in Romans VI Paul showed with equal clarity that the objection is unfounded. The Confession states it this way:

"Faith, thus receiving and resting on Christ and his righteousness, is the alone instrument of justification; yet it is not alone in the person justified, but is ever accompanied with all other saving graces, and is no dead faith, but worketh by love."

Justification is God's judicial act of acquittal, but acquittal never comes to a man without regeneration and effectual calling. God never pardons a man without removing his heart of stone and supplying him with a heart of flesh. Christ's perfect righteousness is never imputed without the sinner's being raised from the dead and given a new life. Faith in Christ, then, is always accompanied by other saving graces; and the second chapter after Justification in the Confession is on Sanctification. We shall come to it shortly.

But we would be in a bad way, as Luther and Calvin well knew, if we had to depend on our own merits for acquittal, pardon, and acceptance with God. For this, only Christ's righteousness is sufficient, and with Christ's righteousness we can be sure of heaven.

*[1954. Sanctification. The Southern Presbyterian Journal Dec. 15. Published in [Essays on Ethics and Politics 1992].]*

## Sanctification

"He died that we might be forgiven, He died to make us good."

In this third stanza of "There is a green hill far away," the doctrines of justification and sanctification are conjoined. Naturally, the limitations of hymnology do not permit an explanation of the conjunction: it would seem that forgiveness and being made good are two results, otherwise unrelated, to Christ's death. But the Confession of Faith, Chapter XIII, and still more explicitly Paul, in Romans VI and elsewhere, make sanctification the purpose or aim of the preceding stages of salvation. It is true, but not sufficient to say, we are justified and we are also being sanctified; it is downright false to say, we are justified by faith alone but of course we must now do some good works; to express the relation with a minimum of adequacy we must drop the and and the but and use the conjunction therefore: we have been acquitted and pardoned of sin apart from any human merit, therefore we must do good works. Or, to quote Rom. 6:14, "Sin shall not have dominion over you (sanctification), for ye are not under the law but under grace" (justification). —"He died to make us good."

Such is the Scriptural answer to the objection that justification by faith alone is an immoral doctrine. It is sanctification that unmasks the caricature quoted in a previous article, "Free from the law, O blessed condition; I can sin as I please and still have remission." Paul's argument is clear: "Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Not at all; how shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein?... Our old man is crucified with Christ in order that the body of sin might be destroyed, in order that henceforth we should not serve sin... Sin shall not have dominion over you."

Because Paul said, "Sin shall not have dominion over you," and because of other expressions, certain groups of people who were not privileged to be guided by the Westminster Confession in their study of the Scriptures have concluded that it is possible to achieve sinless perfection during our earthly life. I know one man who boasted that he had not sinned for twenty-six years. And the fact of the matter is that compared with other Christians he was a very good man. Compared with God's law, however, he was, I am sure, imperfect. It is only through a feeble appreciation of God's righteousness and holiness coupled with an ignorance of the definition of sin that one can imagine that one is sinless. Job was able to hold his own against his irritating friends. He was sure he had not committed any particular sin of which his plagues were the punishment. But when his friends left him and God appeared to him, Job said, "Behold, I am vile. What shall I answer Thee? I will lay my hand upon my mouth."

Sin is any want of conformity unto or transgression of the law of God. To define sin as selfishness or to restrict sin to known sins is inadequate. Sin is defined in terms of the law of God. And no mere man since the fall is able perfectly in this life to keep God's commandments — even for a day. Only Christ was sinless.

*[1954. Free Will. The Southern Presbyterian Journal Dec. 22.]*

## Free Will

When a discussion grows excited, there are two possible explanations. Excitement may indicate the topic is of great importance. Now, in this series of articles on the Westminster Confession every chapter so far has seemed of great importance; and free will is also a matter of importance, though it can hardly be of such importance as the previous chapter on Christ the Mediator. In the second place, excited discussion frequently indicates that the debaters are not sure of themselves. When contenders have neglected essential distinctions and have proceeded beyond their resources, the discussion can go on endlessly and without conclusions. As this has often been the case with discussions on free will, it would be wise to see exactly what the Confession says.

"God hath endued the will of man with that natural liberty that is neither forced nor by any absolute necessity of nature determined to good or evil." Now, what does the Confession mean by natural liberty? Does a Presbyterian mean the same thing that a Romanist or an Arminian means, when they say that man is free. Are there various concepts of freedom?

Obviously there are various concepts of freedom, and most of them have little to do with the present topic. For example, we say today that American citizens are free men, but that the victims of communistic governments are not free. Freedom therefore has a political and an economic sense; but that is not what concerns us here.

More to the point is whether or not the will of man is free from his intellect. Theologians in the past have discussed this at length. But that the will is free from the intellect is not what the Confession means by natural liberty. Calvin, for example, asserted that "the intellect rules the will;" Charles Hodge said that man's "will was subject to his reason;" and Robert J. Breckenridge taught that our primary conception of will includes the notion of its being directed by intelligence. The theology behind all this may be a little intricate, and the matter is mentioned only to show that freedom from intellect is not what Presbyterians mean by the concept of freedom.

Then does freedom, free will, or natural liberty mean that man is free from sin? Or, more pertinently, does it mean that man is free not to sin? Perhaps an Arminian might claim that man has a free will in the sense that he can choose not to sin. But the Confession, in the same chapter, section iii, says, "Man by his fall into a state of sin hath wholly lost all ability of will to any spiritual good accompanying salvation; so as a natural man... is not able by his own strength to convert himself or to prepare himself

thereunto." Some Arminians seem to say that a sinner can choose to prepare himself for conversion; but the Bible says that man is dead in sin and needs to be raised from the dead. A dead man cannot choose to be raised.

Freedom from sin, complete freedom, is attained only in heaven; but even in heaven a completely free and undetermined will cannot be found. It is equally impossible for the glorified saint to choose to sin as it was for the unregenerate to choose not to sin. As St. Augustine said, the condition of man in heaven is non posse peccare: not able to sin. Heaven would be a precarious place if its citizens had this sort of free will.

What then does the Confession mean by the natural liberty of the will. The remainder of the section quoted answers this question as well as two lines can. Man's will "is neither forced nor by any absolute necessity of nature determined." These words were written to repudiate those philosophies which explain human conduct in terms of physicochemical law. Although the Westminster divines did not know twentieth century behaviorism, nor even Spinoza, they very probably knew Thomas Hobbes, and they certainly knew earlier materialistic theories. That man's conduct is determined by inanimate forces is what the Confession denies. Man is not a machine; his motions cannot be described by mathematical equations as the motions of the planets can. His hopes, plans, and activities are not controlled by physical conditions. He is not determined by any absolute necessity of nature.

But this does not mean that man is free from God. The Confession does not deny, but on the contrary explicitly affirms that God controls the will of man. To say that physics and chemistry do not explain conduct is not to rule out God's grace. Section iv states that by his grace alone God enables a man freely to will what is good; the Holy Spirit effectually calls elect sinners to faith in Christ (III vi); he makes them willing and able to believe (VII iii); Christ certainly and effectually applies salvation to his people (VIII viii); and similar expressions occur in later chapters.

Unless God "governs all creatures, actions, and things" (V i), or "all his creatures and all their actions" (Shorter Catechism 11), he would not be actually omnipotent, nor could we be sure his prophecies would infallibly come true. An interesting though obscure case of God's control over the will of men is found in Exodus 34:24. The men of Israel are commanded to appear before the Lord three times a year. As such an occasion would offer an excellent opportunity for an enemy attack, the Lord assures his people that their enemies will not desire to attack at those times. In II Sam. 17:14 Absalom chose the worse advice because the Lord had planned to defeat the better counsel in order to bring evil on Absalom. God also caused Rehoboam to adopt evil counsel (II Chron. 10:15) in order to fulfill his promise to Jeroboam. Better known than these cases are the words of Paul in Phil. 2:12,13, "Work out your own salvation in fear and trembling, for it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do."

Man has a natural liberty not acknowledged by materialistic philosophy, but Christians should never construe that liberty to the detriment of God's omnipotence and grace.

*[1954. Effectual Calling. The Southern Presbyterian Journal Dec. 29.]*

## Effectual Calling

The article before last, on Christ the Mediator, referred to the unwillingness of the derelicts in a rescue mission to accept the gospel of Christ. If the evangelist had to depend solely on his own powers of persuasion, the job would be discouraging and indeed impossible. But the respectable sinner is as dead in sin as the drunken bum. No one can be saved without God's effectual call. Everyone who is born again is "born not of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." Those who, in the interest of an erroneous theory of free will, attribute some ability to man's will, contradict John 1:13 and detract from God's grace.

Conversely, Calvinism and the Westminster Confession assign all the glory and efficacy to God. "All those whom God hath predestinated unto life, and those only, he is pleased... effectually to call... to grace and salvation; enlightening their minds... renewing their wills, and by his almighty power determining them... and effectually drawing them to Jesus Christ... being made willing by his grace."

The reader should of course check this with the Confession, read the words omitted above, and study the Scripture references. Any discouraged minister or evangelist who stretches out his hands to a rebellious people, can find renewed strength in contemplating these thoughts on God's almighty power. Perhaps the evangelist has unconsciously fallen into the temptation of trusting his own power and the ability of the sinner to respond. Returning to the Confession, and to the Scripture which it summarizes, he can once more adjust his message to God's word and trust God to call sinners to repentance.

For "this effectual call is of God's free and special grace alone, not from anything at all foreseen in man, who is altogether passive therein, until, being quickened (resurrected) and renewed by the Holy Spirit, he is thereby enabled to answer this call and to embrace the grace offered and conveyed in it."

Unfortunately many ministers in the large denominations have substituted a social and political theory for this glorious gospel of grace. The president of Princeton Seminary advocates the admission of Red China into the United Nations. The Christian Century is full of pink political propaganda. The World Council emasculates doctrine, repudiates Protestantism by admitting the Greek Catholic organization that persecutes evangelicals, and raises no voice against state control of churches. Certainly it raises no voice to proclaim effectual calling.

How sad it is when ministers and professedly Christian organizations forsake the gospel of grace to

preach something else! The outright denial of Biblical doctrines, in other words, heresy, is bad; but even apart from outright denial, the substitution of another message is almost if not altogether as bad. Whether people are lost because they have heard the Scriptures denied or because they simply have not heard the Scriptures, makes little difference. The servants of Christ have been given a message to proclaim, and failure to proclaim it cannot be excused on the ground that the substitute was socialistic politics instead of outright denial.

Sincere, conservative preachers ought to take stock of themselves too. It is all too easy to forget some parts of the message because we are so interested in some other parts. It is so easy to become lopsided. Then our people will become lopsided too. One excellent method of avoiding this unfortunate result is to preach a series of sermons on the Westminster Confession; or at least we should review the thirty-three chapters to determine what we have not preached on for the past some time.

The gospel must be preached, for "... much less can men not professing the Christian religion be saved in any other way whatsoever, be they ever so diligent to frame their lives according to the light of nature and the law of that religion they do profess; and to assert and maintain that they may, is very pernicious and to be detested." (Sec. iv).

*[1955. Adoption. The Southern Presbyterian Journal Jan. 5.]*

## Adoption

Chapter XII of the Westminster Confession, on Adoption, is rather short, consisting of only one section; yet it undoubtedly merits at least a short discussion. The section states that all those who are justified are also made children of God by adoption and thereby enjoy certain liberties and privileges.

During the past hundred years as modernism developed, the doctrine of adoption has been slighted by those disloyal ministers who have rejected the infallibility of the Bible. In its place they have preached a natural and universal Fatherhood of God and a natural and universal brotherhood of man. Now, the Scriptures have considerable to say about the Fatherhood of God, but they have little or nothing to say about a natural and universal Fatherhood.

One verse that might be so understood is Paul's use of a quotation from a Stoic poet, "for we are also his offspring." Possibly the poet had some notion of a universal Fatherhood, but Paul used the quotation only to stress that God is a Spirit and that men were created in God's image. Another verse is Eph. 3:15, "Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named." But this family is more reasonably understood as the family of the redeemed than as the human race as a whole.

In contrast with these few and doubtful verses, the Scriptures speak many times and clearly of God's Fatherhood in relation to a portion of mankind. If the Pharisees, Jesus said, "ye are of your father the devil"; but he taught his disciples to pray, "Our Father." The most familiar figure of speech by which entrance into the Christian life is described is that of a new birth. Not all men, but some only are born again, not by their own will, but of God; and thus God gives them authority to become sons of God. Quite evidently they were not natural born sons, otherwise they would not have needed to be born again. If men must be born again, those who are not born again are not children of God.

The figure of a new birth is appropriate to the new life that then commences. So also is the figure of the resurrection. Men who were dead in sin are raised with Christ to a life they did not previously have. But the Scriptures also describe this change as adoption. Children of another father are adopted by God and become a part of the Christian family. Here too the previous conclusion follows: if a man becomes a child of God by adoption, he could not have been a child of God by nature. And for the same reason it is clear that the Bible does not teach the universal Fatherhood of God nor the universal brotherhood of man. It speaks about sheep and goats, and about a final and irremediable division between them.

Adoption brings certain privileges that are denied to those not adopted. First, they receive God's name, and as members of the family can now call God, Abba, Father. They are pitied, protected, and provided for. They are sometimes even chastened by God as a Father, "yet never cast off, but sealed to the day of redemption, and inherit the promises as heirs of salvation."

It is comforting to know that the act of adoption cannot be annulled; the new birth can never be undone; the resurrection to newness of life can never be reversed. Later in the Confession this is more fully stated in the chapters on the assurance of salvation and the perseverance of the saints.

*[1955. The Law of God. The Southern Presbyterian Journal Jan. 12.]*

## The Law of God

A certain denomination, of which I am not a member, sponsored a Christmas service in which part of the worship was (what word shall I use?) performed by a troupe of ballet dancers. When I remarked, upon being pressed for an opinion, that ballet was a bit incongruous with divine worship, one of their ministers replied that any exercise that stimulates love of humanity is appropriate in church. Then I tried to tell him of the Puritan principle and of the law of God from which we should not turn aside, either to the right hand or to the left. And, since this minister expatiated on love versus law, I quoted "if ye love me, keep my commandments." But he concluded the conversation, politely enough, by saying that my viewpoint appeared legalistic to him.

The extreme modernists who introduce dancing into the worship service have strange allies in some fundamentalists who also reject the law of God. With all their insistence on the infallibility of the Scripture and on the necessity of Christ's death on the cross for our redemption—may God bless them abundantly, they are really Christians—this segment of fundamentalism denies that the Ten Commandments are binding in this age of the world's history. We are not under law but under grace, they say; we are free from the law and need pay no attention to it. To do so would be legalism.

Now, the three chapters of Romans where our freedom from the law of sin and death is most emphasized are far from disparaging the law. In addition to the strong insistence on the necessity of a righteous life (Rom. 6:2, 6, 12, 15; 8:1, 4, 13), Paul asserts that the law is holy and good (Rom. 7:12), spiritual (7:14), a delight to the godly man (7:22), and the rule of service (7:25). In most cases where the English translation speaks of being free from the law, the Greek more accurately says justified from the law. That is, we are free from the penalty of the law. It does not mean that we are free to disobey God's commands.

This is not legalism. Legalism, or justification by works, is the unscriptural teaching that man can merit heaven by his own efforts. And it is very strange that modernists, who have rejected the gracious sacrifice of Christ, should accuse anyone of being legalistic. But the meanings of words often get twisted these days, both in religion and in politics.

In opposition to legalism the Scriptures base our redemption solely on the merits of Christ. Yet, as we are redeemed from sin, as we come to Christ in repentance, as we are born to newness of life, we are under the same obligation to keep his laws. "If ye love me, keep my commandments."

The Confession of Faith sums up the whole matter very succinctly. After distinguishing the moral law from the ritual and the national laws, it says, (sections v, vi), "The moral law doth forever bind all, as well justified persons as others, to the obedience thereof; and that not only in regard of the matter contained in it, but also in respect of the authority of God, the Creator, who gave it. Neither doth Christ in the gospel any way dissolve, but much strengthen this obligation.

"Although true believers be not under the law as a covenant of works, to be thereby justified or condemned; yet is it of great use to them, as well as to others; in that, as a rule of life, informing them of the will of God and their duty, it directs and binds them to walk accordingly; discovering also the sinful pollutions of their nature, hearts, and lives; so as, examining themselves thereby, they may come to further conviction of, humiliation for, and hatred against sin; together with a clearer sight of the need they have of Christ and the perfection of his obedience."

*[1955. Assurance. The Southern Presbyterian Journal Jan. 19.]*

## Assurance

In the study of our Confession one theme becomes more and more vivid as we proceed from chapter to chapter. It is that the Confession and the Bible teach a system of doctrine. God does not ramble in his message to us. His thoughts are not desultory and disconnected. On the contrary God speaks with logical consistency. Therefore the later chapters of the Confession depend on the earlier.

If God had not begun a good work in us, totally depraved as human nature is, the work would not have begun. If God did not intend to complete that good work in us, it would not be completed. And if there were the slightest possibility that it would not be completed, we could not have the comfort of assurance. That is to say, as the "perseverance of the saints depends not on their own free will, but upon the immutability of the decree of election," so assurance of salvation presupposes the perseverance of the saints.

An Arminian may be a truly regenerate Christian; in fact, if he is truly an Arminian and not a Pelagian who happens to belong to an Arminian church, he must be a saved man. But he is not usually, and cannot consistently be assured of his salvation. The places in which his creed differs from our Confession confuse the mind, dilute the Gospel, and impair its proclamation.

The Arminian system holds (1) that God elects persons to eternal life on the condition of their reception of grace and their perseverance as foreseen; (2) that Christ died, not as the substitute for certain men, definitely to assume their penalty, but to render a chance of salvation indifferently possible to all men; (3) that all men have the same influence of the Holy Ghost operating on them, so that some are saved because they cooperate, and others are lost because they resist, thus in effect making salvation depend on the will of man; and (4) that since salvation is not made certain by God's decree nor by Christ's sacrifice, and since man's will is free or independent of God's control, a regenerate man can unregenerate himself and ultimately be lost.

In contrast the Calvinist, the Confession, and the Bible teach (1) that election is unconditional and that sovereign grace is irresistible; (2) that Christ offers us a difference, you know; (3) that human cooperation is not the cause of regeneration, which depends on God and not on the will of man; and (4) that the new birth begins an eternal life, i. e. a life that does not end in a year or two.

Fortunately not all Arminians, and unfortunately not all Calvinists are consistent; for the former occasionally have some sort of assurance and the latter are now and again without it. It is not true that a

man cannot have eternal life unless he knows it, as some brash evangelists declare. "Infallible assurance doth not so belong to the essence of faith, but that a true believer may wait long and conflict with many difficulties before he be partaker of it; yet, being enabled by the Spirit to know the things which are freely given him of God, he may, without extraordinary revelation, in the right use of ordinary means, attain thereunto. And therefore it is the duty of everyone to give all diligence to make his calling and election sure, that thereby his heart may be enlarged in peace and joy in the Holy Ghost, in love and thankfulness to God, and in strength and cheerfulness in the duties of obedience, the proper fruits of this assurance—so far is it from including men to looseness."

In individual psychology Christian lives show great variety, as section IV goes on to indicate. Not only because of particular sins and temptations, but also because of differences of temperament, of upbringing, of education, of the cultural and historical conditions of one's age, no one pattern of experience fits everybody. Some are too fearful of presumption, others are not fearful enough. Elijah went to heaven in a fiery chariot, but Jeremiah may have died in despondency. Assurance of salvation, like other blessings, does not come to all Christians; but it is a part of the fullness of God's grace which we may legitimately and consistently hope to enjoy.

*[1955. Saving Faith. The Southern Presbyterian Journal Jan. 26.]*

## Saving Faith

Chapter XIV of the Westminster Confession, on Saving Faith, is another of those that invite long study and long explanation. Brevity therefore requires omissions.

"The grace of faith... is the work of the Spirit of Christ." In conformity with the doctrine of total depravity and the need of regeneration, the Confession teaches that faith is a gift of God. It is not something that a sinner can produce by his own will power. Like repentance, which will be discussed in the next chapter, it is a gift. It is something that the Spirit produces within us. In producing faith within us, the Spirit does not ordinarily work without means. Possibly the Spirit never works faith without means; but at least ordinarily He uses the ministry of the word, prayer, and the administration of the sacraments.

Once faith is so produced in us, what effect does it have on us? Now, the principal acts of saving faith are accepting Christ alone for justification, sanctification, and eternal life, by virtue of the covenant of grace. But all these and other derivative effects can be subsumed under one general statement, which the Confession puts at their head.

"By this faith, a Christian believeth to be true whatsoever is revealed in the word, for the authority of God himself speaking therein."

There are ministers of the northern Presbyterian church who say they believe the fact of the Incarnation but not the theory of the Virgin Birth. Presumably the Virgin Birth is a biological miracle and such do not happen. And there are many ministers who believe some statements in the Bible but not others. Such ministers do not believe what they believe because of the authority of God speaking in the word. They believe in a sort of Incarnation that suits their view of science; they believe in a sort of divine love and disbelieve in divine wrath because it suits their sensibilities. They have made the resources of their own minds, apart from revelation, the test of truth. In plain words, they do not accept revelation as God's word.

When such men, and the large denominations are full of them, gather for discussion in a theological society, how do they proceed? Suppose they wish to discuss the existence of God in opposition to naturalistic humanism; or suppose they wish to discuss immortality; or possibly the nature of the church: how do they resolve their arguments?

Having attended such meetings, I can report that they remind me of a bunch of boys arguing about a ball game. One boy says that the ball should be a sphere three inches in diameter; the next boy says, No, it should be an oval about a foot long; the third boy offers a compromise — the ball should be both spherical and a foot in diameter, but he insists that there should be five, not nine or eleven boys on each side. And then a truly ecumenical spirit declares that such creedal discussions are trivial: the important thing is that they should all play one big ball game.

Discussions among Christians whose saving faith has caused them to believe to be true whatever is revealed in the word, for the authority of God himself speaking therein, do not follow such a confused and frustrating procedure. If Christians wish to know what the future life is like, they examine what God has said. "In my father's house there are many mansions; if it were not so I would have told you." "Handle me and see, for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see me have." And in any honest ball game too, the decisions must be made in accordance with the rule book.

"This faith is different in degrees, weak or strong; may be often and many ways assailed and weakened, but gets the victory; growing up in many to the attainment of a full assurance through Christ, who is both the author and the finisher of our faith" (sec. iii).

## Good Works

Many people in the pews, and not merely liberal ministers in the pulpits, express a distaste for doctrine and theology. They want something practical. Well, who can deny that good works are practical?

Unfortunately for those who dislike theology and a detailed confessional statement, there cannot be much progress in good works unless it is known what works are good and what works are evil. And who can deny that a definition of good works is theological, doctrinal, and creedal? The popular disjunction between doctrine and practice, between theology and life, between knowing and doing, is a false one. The theory of practice must precede the practice of theory.

What then are good works? Are they those actions a benevolently intentioned gentleman may happen to enjoy? Is a substantial donation to an orphanage, hospital, or church a good work? Strange as it may seem to non-Christians, and even to uninstructed Christians, the answer is that these actions are not necessarily good. They may be good; but again they may not be. What then makes a work or action good?

Two requirements must be fulfilled before an act can properly be called good. The Confession says, "Good works are only such as God hath commanded in his holy word, and not such as, without the warrant thereof, are devised by men out of blind zeal, or upon any pretense of good intention."

The first part of this section teaches that unless we had the Bible, it would be impossible to know what is good and what is evil. To be sure, the heathen know that there is a distinction between right and wrong; and they regularly violate their consciences; but they do not know in particular what acts are right because their consciences are unenlightened. The Biblical revelation is essential to a knowledge of what works are good.

The second part of this same section teaches the same truth in a negative form. Without the warrant of the Bible an act done with good intentions is not a good work. Similarly, the blind zeal and arrogant authority of Romanism imposes practices, such as genuflection, crossing oneself, using holy water, kissing the big toe of St. Peter's image, which are not good works at all. Since they are beside the commandments of God, they are superstitious practices that God abominates. These are the things Paul had in mind in Col. 2:18,23, where he speaks of the sins of voluntary humility and will worship.

Thus the first requirement for a good work is that it be commanded by God. But why was it said that a donation to an orphanage may not be a good work? Surely God commands us to take care of the widows and orphans in their affliction. This paradox is removed by considering the second requirement for a good work.

"Works done by unregenerate men, although, for the matter of them, they may be things which God commands, and of good use both to themselves and others; yet because they proceed not from a heart purified by faith, nor are done in a right manner according to the word, nor to a right end, the glory of God; they are therefore sinful and cannot please God, or make a man meet to receive grace from God. And yet their neglect of them is more sinful and displeasing unto God." (sec. vii).

Because a good work must proceed from a heart purified by faith, it follows that men's "ability to do good works is not at all of themselves, but wholly from the Spirit of Christ. And that they may be enabled thereunto... there is required an actual influence of the Holy Spirit to work in them to will and to do of his good pleasure" (sec. iii). Thus while good works are done voluntarily and not against our wishes and desires, they are not the result of a "free" will independent of God. God in his sovereign grace changes our desires and makes us willing.

In conclusion, for these articles must be extremely brief, no matter how great the totality of our good works, they do not merit pardon for sin or eternal life. Contrary to the modernist and Romanist theories of salvation by works, Calvinism teaches that when we have done all we can, we are still unprofitable servants. The Roman notion that some men can do actually more than God requires, and that the extra merits earned by these men avail for other less energetic sinners, is a Satanic delusion. Christ alone has satisfied the justice of his Father, and he has satisfied it perfectly. Deo soli gratia.

*[1955. Christian Liberty. The Southern Presbyterian Journal Feb. 16.]*

## Christian Liberty

Freedom and liberty are grand words, but if we are to talk intelligibly, our words must be unambiguously defined. In several preceding articles unscriptural meanings of the word freedom and the phrase free from the law have been pointed out. Chapter XX of the Confession enumerates the factors which comprise and define Christian liberty.

"The liberty which Christ hath purchased for believers under the gospel consists in their freedom from the guilt of sin... the curse of the moral law... bondage to Satan... All which were common also to believers under the law..." (sec. 1).

In addition to these elements of liberty, which particularly concerns us in our individual lives, Christian liberty includes the liberty of conscience in the face of tyrannical ecclesiastical organizations. Some years ago a young man presented himself to a Presbytery for ordination. As he was known to believe that the boards and agencies of that church were infiltrated with modernism, he was asked whether he would support the boards and agencies. He replied that he would support them insofar as they were true to the Bible. This answer did not please Presbytery, and he was asked if he would support the boards regardless of what they did. When the young man declined to make any such blind promise, the Presbytery refused to ordain him.

One of his friends remarked that the difference between modernism and Christianity might be stated thus: in modernism you believe as you please but do what the officials tell you; in true Presbyterianism you do as you please so long as you believe what the Confession says.

As the twentieth century has seen a great increase in the control that national governments exercise over their citizens, so too with ecclesiastical organizations there is a trend toward centralization, bureaucracy, and an indifference toward inalienable rights. Well publicized gatherings of Protestant prelates parade in robes, and the press reports the colorful pageantry. Impressive imitation of popery! And the same eventual results are to be expected.

"God alone is Lord of the conscience and hath left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men which are in anything contrary to his word, or beside it in matters of faith and worship" (sec. ii).

The changing majorities of a Council or General Assembly which pushes a conjectural translation of the Bible one year and another year issues Sunday School lessons whose conjectures are still worse, may boast that their theology is not static but dynamic. A different doctrine every decade—while the orthodox fuddy-duddies keep on believing the same thing all the time!

But what moral chaos there is, when the law of God is abandoned for the latest style of unbelief. It used to be Ritschl's value judgments; now it is paradox; next it will be — who can guess?

The law of God is stable because God is unchangeable. Those who believe God do not need to change their moral principles with the passing years. Nor will they change their worship, push the Bible to one side, put an altar in the center, pray to the saints and the Virgin, nor, as the last article recounted, engage a troupe of ballet dancers to fill an empty pulpit.

*[1955. Perseverance. The Southern Presbyterian Journal Feb. 23.]*

## Perseverance

One evening as I was conducting the mid-week prayer meeting, an elderly, white haired gentleman asked for one of his favorite hymns: How Firm a Foundation. The hymn has six long stanzas, and as the meeting was informal I wondered aloud which of the six we could omit. Not the first, of course—it speaks of the word of God as the foundation of our faith; not the second because we need the aid and strength of God's omnipotent hand; the third or fourth? The old gentleman interrupted my wondering by insisting that this was a good hymn and that we could sing it all. We did, and as we reached the fifth stanza, everyone else in the room saw in it the picture of the grand old man who had requested the hymn:

E'en down to old age all my people shall prove  
My sovereign, eternal, unchangeable love.  
And whom hoary hairs shall their temples adorn,  
Like lambs they shall still in my bosom be borne.

He too sang it with vigor, and he sang the sixth stanza too:

The soul that on Jesus hath leaned for repose  
I will not, I will not desert to his foes.

Now it was a bit strange that this gentleman should have requested this hymn and should have sung it with such praise and devotion. For he did not like Calvinism; all his life he had been an Arminian; he did not believe in eternal security. He had told the people so for years. Or, had he now come to believe without realizing that the Arminian views of his earlier days had changed with the color of his hair?

If it is strange that this lovely Arminian saint could become at least somewhat of a Calvinist without knowing it, it is far more strange that anyone who bases his faith on the firm foundation of God's word could ever be an Arminian. The Scripture verses are too numerous to mention. But some may be puzzled at the doctrine of perseverance and think that it ascribes too much will power to frail humanity. Such an objection rests on a misunderstanding. The Confession says, "This perseverance of the saints depends not upon their own free will, but upon the immutability of the decree of election, flowing from

the free and unchangeable love of God the Father; upon the efficacy of the merit and intercession of Jesus Christ; the abiding of the Spirit and of the seed of God within them; and the nature of the covenant of grace; from all which ariseth also the certainty and infallibility thereof."

What should be particularly noted in this section is how the doctrine of perseverance fits in with all the other doctrines. God is not irrational or insane. What he says hangs together; it forms a logical system. Election, total depravity, effectual calling, sovereign grace, and perseverance are mutually consistent. God does not contradict himself. But Arminian saints do. They may be grand old men, loved by all who know them. But not until the message of the Bible persuades them of God's sovereign, unchangeable love, can they really sing

That soul, though all hell should endeavor to shake,

I'll never, no, never, no, never forsake.

*[1955. Worship and Vows. The Southern Presbyterian Journal Mar. 2.]*

## Worship and Vows

Chapter XXI, Religious Worship and the Sabbath Day, repeats what has been anticipated several times heretofore: that "the acceptable way of worshipping the true God is instituted by himself, and so limited by his revealed will that he may not be worshipped according to the imaginations and devices of men..." Therefore Bible believing Presbyterians will not make the sign of the cross, sprinkle themselves with holy water, bow to the altar, or invent any rite not prescribed in the Scriptures.

For the same reason "Religious worship is to be given to God... alone; not to angels, saints, or any other creature." It is evident therefore how far Roman Catholicism, with its images, its prayers to the saints, and its Mariolatry, has departed from the Christian faith. Roman Catholics try to defend themselves from the charge of idolatry by saying that they do not confuse the image with the person represented and do not worship the image; they merely use the image to help them concentrate on Mary, a saint, or Christ. But if this is what it takes to have idolatry, and if idolatry can exist only when the worshipper confuses the image and the god, then we wonder whether the Ephesians who worshipped Diana were idolators. Those pagans never thought that the silver images were Diana. Diana was in heaven; she had thrown down a wooden image of herself; and the silversmiths were making reasonable facsimiles. The Romanists therefore in defending themselves from the charge of idolatry have also defended the Ephesians. The worship of the two groups is essentially the same; they both do what the Scriptures prohibit. Similarly the Roman exaltation of Mary as immaculately conceived, as Queen of Heaven, and as coredemptrix is not less than blasphemy. Again they defend themselves by making a scholastic distinction: they worship (latreuein) God alone, they give doulia to the saints, and hyperdoulia to Mary. But the Scriptures make no such distinction. Doulos is the word Paul most frequently uses to express his relationship to God.

When the Confession continues by insisting that divine worship requires a mediator and that that Mediator is Christ alone, we think of many people who try to pray, to approach God, to perform religious exercises, without using the name and merit of Christ. Whether images, idols, and saints be added, or whether Christ be subtracted, it is all equally an abomination to God.

After four sections on prayer, the reading of the Scripture, preaching and the sacraments, the last two sections of Chapter XXI treat of the Sabbath or Lord's Day. In the time of Christ the Pharisees added non-scriptural restrictions to the keeping of the Sabbath, and Jesus rebuked them for it. Even our Scottish forefathers seem to have been inconsistently strict; for it is hard to believe that shaving in the morning desecrates the day any more than washing the hands or brushing the teeth. But the faults of

those who were too strict do not exonerate those who are too lax. And no one can deny that this age errs on the side of laxity. I know one man and wife who could not come to church because they had to give their dog a walk! And others who know more about the Bible have repudiated all the Ten Commandments chiefly because they think the fourth is legalistic. Would it not be strange if a purely ritual and temporary requirement had been put fourth in a list of such all important duties?

The following chapter of the Confession, on Oaths and Vows, contains nothing difficult and hence can be passed over with a brief mention. Those who desire Scriptural guidance with respect to some parts of private worship will find the reading of this chapter quite helpful. Among other things it points out that religious oaths and vows are not lightly to be taken; but when made, they are to be faithfully kept, even when made to heretics and infidels.

Further, the content of all oaths and vows must be in conformity with the Scripture; for it is a sin to make a sinful vow. Therefore the "Popish monastical vows... are superstitious and sinful snares in which no Christian may entangle himself."

*[1955. The Sacraments. The Southern Presbyterian Journal Mar. 9.]*

## The Sacraments

On one occasion a friend and I visited some Lutheran professors. Perhaps they had not received many Calvinistic visitors, or perhaps they merely wanted to get the conversation started; but at any rate one of them asked what were some of the differences between Calvinists and Lutherans. Since we were not on a polemic mission, it did not seem wise to mention any major topic of contention such as predestination or perseverance; so I sought for some obscure technicality and remarked that Calvinists do not accept the theory of the communication idiomatum. (This is the theory that the qualities of Christ's divine nature can be attributed to his human nature.) But instantly, one of the gentlemen, a professor neither of philosophy nor of theology, but of history, replied that a denial on this point would undermine the whole Lutheran view of the sacraments. At such immediate penetration, my esteem of Lutheran scholarship, already high, soared still higher. But it struck me as a great tragedy of history that Lutheranism has tenaciously held to the one point at which Luther differed from the Calvinists, while at the same time it has departed from Luther on the many points of agreement.

In attributing to Christ's human nature, particularly to his body, the divine attribute of omnipresence, the Lutherans maintain a view of the Lord's Supper that is not far enough removed from the very objectionable Romish view. The Lord's Supper and Baptism will each be discussed in the following articles; but with respect to all their sacraments the Romanists hold that the effect is, one might say, automatically produced if the sacrament is properly administered. The water itself regenerates and the physical body of Christ nourishes.

On the contrary, the Westminster Confession says that "Sacraments are holy signs and seals of the covenant of grace." This is in full accord with Paul's warnings to those Jews who trusted in circumcision. "Circumcision verily profiteth, if thou keep the law; but if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision... For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh..." (Rom. 2:25-29). And to the same effect: "Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat... for he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself..." (I Cor. 11: 27-31).

Furthermore, in Romanism the proper administration of a sacrament, and therefore its efficacy, depends on the intention of the priest. Unless the priest has the secret intention of doing what the Church intends in the definition of the sacrament, the thing does not work. Now, there was a priest who came to rebel against the whole system of his church. He came to have a hatred of religion. While in this state of mind, according to his later confession, he baptized many infants with the intention, not of doing what

the Church defined, but of sending them to hell. Of course the priest is hardly to be commended for such evil intentions, as he himself later came to see; but consider the position of the Roman church which deprived these infants of regeneration by making a valid baptism to depend on the priest. On the Romish view a priest may outwardly pronounce every word and perform every action prescribed by the ritual, and the recipient may fulfill every condition required of him; yet if the priest has the wrong intention, the worshipper goes away destitute of the grace he thinks he has received.

How different is the position of Paul, of the Reformers, and of the Confession. "The grace which is exhibited in or by the Sacraments, rightly used, is not conferred by any power in them; neither doth the efficacy of a Sacrament depend upon the piety or intention of him that doth administer it, but upon the work of the Spirit, and the word of institution, which contains, together with a precept authorizing the use thereof, a promise of benefit to worthy receivers."

[1955. *Baptism. The Southern Presbyterian Journal Mar. 16.*]

## Baptism

Baptism is a doctrine on which there are obvious disagreements among Christians: the meaning of baptism is disputed, the subjects to be baptized are not agreed upon, the method of performing baptism is different, and, if we consider some of the smaller eddies of Christian thought, it is even denied that Christ commanded baptism.

Although the difference between the Baptists and the other Christian denominations is commonly supposed to be their peculiar insistence on immersion, the root of the matter goes deeper into the significance or meaning of the rite. The Baptists hold that baptism symbolizes the death, burial, and resurrection of the believer with Christ. They quote Rom. 6:3,4: "... were baptized into his death — Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death." But for Presbyterians and other Christians, while this of course is true, it is not the whole story. That is to say, connection with the death of Christ does not exhaust the significance of baptism. Gal. 3:27 speaks of being baptized into Christ, without particularizing his death; and most obviously of all, the reference in the command to baptize is not limited to Christ alone, much less his death, but the command is to baptize into the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Naturally, if a theory omits two thirds or more of the relevant material, a number of errors can be expected.

Baptism can be maintained as exclusively a symbol of burial with Christ only by ignoring most of what the New Testament says about its significance. In John 3:22-25 the practice of baptism by John's disciples and by Jesus' disciples gives rise to a discussion on purification. The baptism of cups and pots in Mark 7:4, following the washing of hands in the preceding verse, shows that baptism is a washing or purification. Hebrews 9:10 speaks of divers baptisms and in verses 13, 19, and 21 shows that these baptisms are sprinklings for purification. Similarly the blood of Christ, which he shed at his death, purges our consciences from dead works. Acts 22:16 says, "Be baptized and wash away thy sins." From verses like these we conclude that baptism is not a symbol of burial with Christ but of cleansing from sin. If burial were to be symbolized, instead of using water it would have been more appropriate to dig a grave and use earth. Water fits in with washing.

The second question concerns the persons who are to be baptized. Baptists baptize adults only; the other churches baptize infants also. Some of our good Baptist friends (and we are by no means questioning their devotion to our Lord) may maintain that an explicit authorization of infant baptism would be the only justification for the common Christian procedure. But if all the details of a rite had to be explicitly authorized in the New Testament, then it would follow that women ought not to be

admitted to the Lord's Supper. But not everything is explicitly set down in Scripture. God has given us the divine gift of logical reasoning, so that as the very first chapter of the Confession says, (section six) certain things may be deduced from Scripture by good and necessary consequence.

Part of the material from which infant baptism is deduced was referred to in the chapters on the Covenant and on the Church. First, the Covenant has always included the children of believers. Cf. Gen. 9:1,9,13; Gen. 12:2,3 and 17:7; Ex. 20:5; Deut. 29:10,11; and Acts 2:38,39. And it hardly needs pointing out that the sign of the covenant was administered to male infants in the Old Testament. Now, second, the Old Testament church and the New Testament church are the same church. Not only was the gospel preached to Abraham so that those in Christ are Abraham's seed (Gal. 3:8,29), but Romans 11:18-24 teaches that the Jewish branch was cut off from the tree that a Gentile branch could be grafted into this same tree, and that the Jewish branch will again be grafted back into the same tree. Note that it is all one tree from one root. The Jews will be restored, not to a new and different church, but to their own olive tree into which the Gentiles have been grafted. (Cf. Eph. 2:11-22). Accordingly, if children received the sign of the Covenant in the time of Abraham, far from requiring an explicit authorization to continue their inclusion in the Church, it would require an explicit authorization in the New Testament to deny them the privilege now.

This line of reasoning is more than completed by pointing out that, as the Lord's Supper replaces the Passover, so baptism has been substituted for circumcision. Col. 2:11,12 indicates that baptism is the circumcision of Christ.

After so much heavy argument, the disagreement as to the mode of baptism will have to be dismissed with a bit of humor that I trust no one will think misplaced. In I Cor. 10:1,2 the Israelites are said to have been baptized in the cloud and in the sea; and in I Peter 3:20 the flood is said to represent baptism; but while the Israelites and Noah may have been sprinkled, it was the others that were immersed.

*[1955. The Church. The Southern Presbyterian Journal Mar. 23.]*

## The Church

When the Confession speaks of the catholic church, it does not mean the Roman church. In fact, the Roman church is not catholic. Catholic means universal and "the catholic or universal church, which is invisible, consists of the whole number of the elect that have been, are, or shall be gathered into one, under Christ, the head thereof..." The word church itself (ecclesia) is derived from the verb to call or to call out. The catholic church then is the aggregate of all whom God has called out or predestinated to eternal life.

The invisible church, or more accurately a part of it, becomes the visible church as those who confess Christ, together with their children, are organized into congregations. In the last article it was maintained that civil government ought not to coerce Baptist congregations to renounce their independence. Definition of Baptist belief and practice by civil magistrates is to be deplored and opposed. At the same time we believe that the New Testament (e.g. Acts 15) prescribes an ecclesiastical organization wider than the local congregation. Therefore we are Presbyterians. But the Baptists, we gladly admit, are more nearly right than some ultra devout persons who think there should be no ecclesiastical organization whatever. One's blind spot must be of unusual size to miss all the various organizational, disciplinary, judicial, and administrative prescriptions of the Bible.

Although as Presbyterians we believe that there should be an ecclesiastical organization wider than the local congregation, it does not follow that the visible church ought to be formed into a single organization. Every attempt by the proponents of ecumenical union to support their views by exegesis has been a notable failure. And a study of history shows clearly that the scandal of Christendom is not the multiplicity of small denominations, but the corruption of one big denomination. Those persons who value organizational union over doctrinal and moral purity can readily achieve satisfaction. Let them repent of the schism of Luther and Calvin, and return to Rome.

But all who believe that Luther and Calvin effected not a schism but a reformation place a greater stress on doctrinal purity than on organization—even good organization, not to speak of bureaucratic centralization. And in addition we are far from admitting that all organizations which call themselves Christian, are necessarily Christian. "The purest churches under heaven are subject both to mixture and error; and some have so degenerated as to become no churches of Christ, but synagogues of Satan."

One difference, no doubt the chief difference, between a church of Christ and a synagogue of Satan is

that the former has no other head but the Lord Jesus Christ. Whether or not a given organization has Christ as head is not to be decided merely by a formal claim. "Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven." It is possible for a group to have a fine doctrinal statement and pay no attention to it. When the ministers of a denomination repeatedly deny essential elements of the gospel, attack the Virgin Birth and the substitutionary atonement, when they are more interested in admitting Red China to the United Nations than in the physical return of Christ to earth, and when over a period of years the denomination makes no effort to remove such men from its rolls, then, despite any historic profession, it is naïve to believe that Christ is acknowledged as head. The test is obedience to Christ's commands, not empty ordination vows.

"There is no other head of the Church but the Lord Jesus Christ; nor can the Pope of Rome in any sense be the head thereof; but is that Antichrist, that man of sin and son of perdition, that exalteth himself in the Church against Christ, and all that is called God" (sec. vi).

Would that Luther and Calvin, who defied the Councils of their day, were alive now to defy the Councils of our day.

*[1955. The Civil Magistrate. The Southern Presbyterian Journal Mar. 30.]*

## The Civil Magistrate

Godless people outside the Church of Christ, if by chance and by mistake they ever should read the previous articles on effectual calling, saving faith, assurance, and so on, would consider the topics trivial, or even nonsense, and the reading tedious. But in this age few of them would dismiss the problems of civil government as unimportant. When Dictator Franco and the Roman church attempt to force American military and civilian personnel to beg permission of a Roman bishop in order to marry one another, even a full fledged secularist develops an interest in the relation of church to state. Many non-Christians are also interested in the moral problem of war and pacifism. On these two subjects the Westminster Confession has something to say.

Any conclusion relative to church and state, war and peace, and capital punishment depends on some theory of the nature of civil authority. By what right does a government exist? Those who reject divine revelation base the state either on naked power and brutality, or on some sort of social contract, or on a natural development from the family. Elsewhere I have argued in detail that the latter two reduce to the first; with the result that secularism eventuates in dictatorship and totalitarian rule. It is only in the Hebrew-Christian revelation, e.g. in the account of King Ahab and Naboth's vineyard, that the rightful power of government is limited.

"God, the supreme Lord and King of all the world, hath ordained civil magistrates to be under him over the people, for his own glory and the public good; and to this end, hath armed them with the power of the sword, for the defense and encouragement of them that are good, and for the punishment of evil doers" (sec. 1).

Here the Confession, summarizing the Biblical position, gives the origin of the state and settles the discussion on pacifism and capital punishment. Even Christian pacifists, who in spite of their lovely character we believe to have misunderstood the Bible, do not claim that the Old Testament forbids all war. But neither does the New Testament. Christ said, "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's." Christ knew that Caesar had an army; he did not refuse to pay taxes to Rome on the ground that some of the tribute would be used to support that army. Yet in the United States today some people think it a Christian duty to refuse to follow Christ's teaching and example. They would rather go to jail than to pay one penny to support the military. Of course, in Christ's statement war is not explicitly mentioned—it is an inference, howbeit a justifiable inference, we believe. But the New Testament provides more than an inference. In Rom. 13:4 the power of the sword is explicitly assigned to civil government. This disposes of pacifism and the objection to capital punishment. If the courts and the juries of our land were not so adverse to capital punishment, it is likely that brutal crimes would be

fewer; and if the relatively juster governments of the west had been willing to wage war against international criminals, the lives of twenty million Chinese, Koreans, and Russians might have been saved. And the United States would have been in a much safer position today.

The relation of church to state is another lively issue at the present time. Where the Roman church controls the government, Protestants suffer oppression and physical persecution. Their churches are bombed and their ministers are murdered. The Greek church, a part of the World Council, has caused the arrest and is prosecuting two Protestants for distributing New Testaments. In our own land the Romanists are constantly attempting to divert public funds to their own purposes. A while back they were advocating an ambassador to the Vatican, and will probably push it again when they see an opportunity. In New Mexico, that is, in the United States, Protestant Indians have been denied by court order the right to hold Protestant prayer meetings even in their own homes (cf. United Evangelical Action, Feb. 1, 1954, p. 18). And bills have been introduced into Congress to honor the Virgin Mary by issuing commemorative stamps for the Marian year.

Unfortunately there are also Protestants who want a close tie-in of church and state. Some of the large denominations support lobbies for socialistic legislation. But what is worse, there are those who want the state to define the articles of religion. For example, the North Rocky Mount Baptist church, in North Carolina, by majority vote, withdrew from the Southern Baptist Convention. As to the issues involved and the wisdom of their withdrawal, I have nothing to say. It is their legal right to withdraw that is the important point. The minority went to court and the court awarded them the property. The judge claimed that he did not rule on religious beliefs. But the court defined what a Church is, and held that a Baptist church could not withdraw from the Convention and be independent. Now, certainly, the definition of the Church is a religious belief on which denominations differ. The Baptist, contrary to the Presbyterians, have always held to independency and have claimed that there is no ecclesiastical authority superior to the local congregation. But the news reports say that the North Carolina supreme court has made it illegal for Baptists to conduct their affairs in accordance with Baptist doctrine. In spite of the fact that the minority has won a legal case in favor of the Southern Baptist Convention, we wonder whether the Convention in good conscience can accept the verdict. Will they insist on retaining the local property at the cost of having their beliefs on the nature of the Church settled by the civil government?

It is also interesting to note that the socialistic Christian Century hails the decision of the court. This radical periodical wants uniformity and ecumenicity enforced by civil decree when possible. The ecumaniacs generally favor centralization of power; they want to control property; they do not object to state churches, or even to the Greek persecution of evangelicals. It would seem that the separation of church and state is a last remnant of Romanism that proves hard to part with.

*[1955. The Lord's Supper. The Southern Presbyterian Journal Apr. 6.]*

## The Lord's Supper

As one might expect, the Westminster Confession in explaining the Lord's Supper emphasizes the distinction between the evangelical and the Romish views. The two most important points at which Romanism has departed from Scriptural teaching are its theory of transubstantiation and the derivative doctrine that the mass is actually an expiatory sacrifice.

Transubstantiation is the theory that the bread and wine, by the magic pronouncement of the priest, become in substance the very body and blood of Christ. Inasmuch as the sensible qualities (i.e. the color, taste, consistency, etc.) of the elements remain unchanged, Rome supports the theory of transubstantiation by an appeal to the philosophy of Aristotle in which a particular relationship between substance and accident is elaborated. Aristotle's philosophy is too subtle to be discussed here, and the Bible centered thinker can hardly make Aristotle his guide for the Lord's Supper. As a Scriptural basis for transubstantiation the Romanists teach that Christ's words, "This is my body," changed the bread into his body. And even the Lutherans, though they repudiate transubstantiation, take these words literally and insist that the verb *is* can have only one meaning. It requires no profound scholarship to see that this is not so. The verb *to be* in Scripture can and does take on figurative as well as literal meanings. When Christ said "I am the door," he surely did not mean that he was an oak panel three inches thick. Again, "I am the resurrection," does not mean literally that Jesus was Lazarus walking out of the tomb. In the book of Revelation the verb *to be* is frequently used in the sense of *to represent*. For example, "The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven candlesticks... are the seven churches" (Rev. 1:20); "these are the two olive trees" (Rev. 11:4); and "the seven heads are seven mountains" (Rev. 17:9). Now, in the same sense in which the seven heads are or represent seven mountains, so the bread is or represents Christ's body. The one is the figure of the other.

What further makes transubstantiation abhorrent to those who abide by the Scriptures is the inference drawn from it. If the bread is literally Christ's body, and if the priest breaks the bread, then Christ's body is broken again and the sacrifice of the cross is repeated every time the mass is said. The Council of Trent (Twenty-second Session, chap. 2) asserted that "this sacrament is truly propitiatory..., for the Lord, appeased by the oblation thereof,... forgives even heinous crimes and sins. For the victim is one and the same." Against this view the Scriptures are particularly explicit. Hebrews 9:22-28 can hardly be misunderstood: "Nor yet that he should offer himself often... but now once in the end of the world... So Christ was "just once (once for all) offered to bear the sins of many."

For these unscriptural theories imposed by the arbitrary authority of the Roman Church, a number of

subsidiary objectionable practices follow. For once the rule of Scripture is bypassed, there is no restraining man's fertile imagination. Hence the Roman church "reserves" some of the body and blood of Christ and carries them around in processions. Instead of celebrating the Lord's Supper as a common meal, it serves private masses. Contrary to the express command of Christ, it denies the cup to the laity; and it has even done away with the bread in favor of a glucose wafer. Then too, whereas Christ instituted the Lord's Supper after the regular Passover meal, the Roman church, again by an arbitrary act of authority, requires its people to fast from midnight until they receive the wafer in the morning.

But if the Roman church is so obviously not a Christian church, what shall be said of modernistic churches? When ministers reject the sole authority of the Bible, where can they find the rules and practices of the Lord's Supper—or any any part of ecclesiastical administration — except in their own arbitrary imaginations? If it seems aesthetic to them, they will push the pulpit and its Bible over to one side, abolish the communion table, and put up an altar against the back wall. Now, it is easy to understand why they wish to remove the Bible from its place of central importance; but what do they put in its place? What are they asking the congregation to center attention upon? That piece of furniture they call an altar—what do they sacrifice upon it? Surely they do not hold to transubstantiation. Unfortunately they do not believe that even Christ's sacrifice on Calvary was satisfactory to his Father's justice. In fact, we might ask why such churches go through the motions of celebrating the Lord's Supper. What do they mean by it? Such questions, I fear, cannot be answered clearly because these people have no infallible rule of faith to direct them how they should glorify and enjoy God.

On the contrary, a confessional church, if it believes its Confession, knows what the significance of the sacraments is, understands why it administers them, and, instead of relying on vague answers, unguided imagination, or aesthetic taste, can give clear-cut, above-board explanations from the word of God.

*[1955. Censures and Councils. The Southern Presbyterian Journal Apr. 13.]*

## Censures and Councils

"The Lord Jesus, as king and head of his Church, hath therein appointed a government in the hand of church-officers, distinct from the civil magistrate." In the United States, perhaps better than anywhere else in the world, the separation of church and state has been maintained. Whenever, as in the Middle Ages, and wherever, as in Spain and other Roman countries today, the church controls the state, the church has been corrupt; and why Anglicans and Scandinavian Lutherans want politicians to control the church, is beyond the understanding of an American Calvinist. If we know what is good for us, both civilly and ecclesiastically, we shall resist the socialistic extension of governmental authority that has already, in one or two instances, infringed on our inalienable religious liberty.

To the officers whom Christ has appointed for his Church, he has given authority to impose censures. "Church censures are necessary for the reclaiming and gaining of offending brethren; for deterring of others from like offenses; for purging out of that leaven which might infect the whole lump; for vindicating the honor of Christ and the holy profession of the gospel; and for preventing the wrath of God which might justly fall upon the Church, if they should suffer his covenant and the seals thereof to be profaned by notorious and obstinate offenders" (sec. iii).

Because this principle has become virtually a dead letter in most of the denominations, the results it was supposed to have prevented have overtaken us. Offending brethren are not reclaimed, nor are others deterred from offending; the leaven that should have been purged has infected the whole lump; instead of Christ's honor being vindicated, people have no respect for a pusillanimous church; and the wrath of God seems about to fall upon us. From ecclesiastical country clubs, good Lord, deliver us!

"For the better government and further edification of the Church, there ought to be such assemblies as are commonly called synods or councils.... It belongeth to synods and councils, ministerially, to determine controversies of faith and cases of conscience... which decrees and determinations, if consonant to the word of God, are to be received with reverence and submission."

Some Christians do not believe in synods or councils and have therefore insisted on a strictly congregational form of government. The congregation admits new members, inflicts censures (if it wishes), and ordains men to the ministry—all without supervision by or appeal to a higher court. Perhaps it is not surprising that congregationalists overlook or reinterpret I Tim. 5:14, which indicates that ordination should occur by the laying on of the hands of the presbytery; it is more surprising that

they proceed without an express New Testament instance of ordination by the laity; but what goes beyond my Presbyterian comprehension is the total repudiation of synods and councils in the light of Acts 15.

At the same time one must admit that some errors are less pernicious than others. In the history of the church much less damage has been done by Congregationalism than by synodical usurpation of unlimited power. Though it is not wise to flee from one extreme to the other, congregational revulsion from ecclesiastical tyranny can easily be appreciated by all except the tyrants.

Now, the Confession states that the decrees of councils are to be received with submission, if they are consonant to the word of God. And in the next section it says, "all synods or councils... may err and many have erred; therefore they are not to be made the rule of faith and practice." A. A. Hodge in his Commentary on the Westminster Confession states that "if their decisions are opposed plainly to the word of God, the private member should disregard them."

How different this Presbyterian position is from the position of Dr. Eugene Blake, Stated Clerk of the U.S.A. General Assembly, who said, "The will of the majority of the Presbytery is the will of God." According to another official in that denomination, "Now that the Committee has acted, that becomes the action of the Presbytery, and that is the will of God." Such a position as this may be popery, it may be paranoia, but whatever it is, it is not Presbyterian.

These delusions of grandeur, delusions of deity we might say, have led some churches to violate the Confession of Faith by transgressing upon civil authority. They forget they are the church and aspire to be the federal government. This is not Presbyterianism, either. The Confession says, "Synods and councils... are not to intermeddle with civil affairs... unless by way of humble petition in cases extraordinary; or by way of advice for satisfaction of conscience if they be thereunto required by the civil magistrate." Yet in spite of this specific injunction, lobbying has become a dignified activity for ecclesiastical officials. One day it may be the Presbyterians, whose majority vote determines the will of God, asking that Red China be seated at the U. N., or perhaps that federal expenses for public housing or education be sharply increased; another day it may be the Methodists who denounce congressional investigations as being after the pattern of Medieval Spain and modern totalitarian states. But no, I may have it backwards: it was this last item that came from a Presbyterian source. But it was not Presbyterianism.

Wouldn't it be wonderful if all Presbyterians were Presbyterian!

*[1955. Resurrection and Judgment. The Southern Presbyterian Journal Apr. 20.]*

## Resurrection and Judgment

Otherworldliness is a reproach frequently brought against Christianity. Belief in heaven is crudely ridiculed as "pie in the sky." Distinguished leaders of American education use more dignified language. For example, one professor writes that the humanism which he advocates "means that the comforting faith in some guarantee of human values is replaced by a resolute readiness to face the tragedies and crises of life in terms of our knowledge of their naturalness and probability, finding in the sense of friendly comradeship with our fellows a more than satisfying compensation for loss of the cozy but illusory feeling that underneath are the everlasting arms of a divine protector." Another humanist is more forthright in stating that theistic religion is "the most active and pervasive menace to civilization which confronts us today."

In the same vein left wing religious liberals fill their periodicals and sermons with socialistic politics and confine their hopes to this world. No otherworldliness for them. Insofar as this type of accusation against historic Christianity is made to imply that the orthodox are "socially irresponsible" and have no interest in present human ills, it is a propaganda device to conceal the fact that theological conservatives are very much concerned with present human misery and are concerned not to increase it by subjecting the nation to secularistic socialism; but insofar as it reproaches us for having our citizenship in heaven, it should not so much be borne in silence as proclaimed proudly, publicly, and with vigor.

Those who deny the life beyond the grave should be forced, by insistent challenge, to face the implications of their thought. Although they have a program of socialization, which no doubt they sincerely believe will improve the conditions of humanity, they should be made to explain how their philosophic naturalism can logically support no matter what program of improvement. They should be questioned pointedly how secularism can furnish a basis for morality. Frequently they speak of morality as a social code; sometimes they speak of it as an individual emotional reaction. In any case there is no "cosmic guarantee" that the effort expended in advancing their program will be rewarded and that opposition to it will be punished. Do not history and observable facts show that devotion to the good (whatever anyone thinks the good is) is worth the trouble. On naturalistic assumptions therefore, no reason can be given for choosing a life of honesty and truth rather than a life devoted to becoming a communistic dictator. Honor and truth may offer lesser risks with mediocre rewards; Stalin's choice brought immense rewards even though the risk was great. Because secularism and left wing politics provide no logical ground for choosing a life of honesty and truth, the theological conservatives are justified in suspecting that totalitarianism will be the actual result.

For that matter, can humanism give a reason for not committing suicide? Of course, when things go well with us and we are enjoying ourselves, we may prefer to live a little while longer. But this is only a personal preference; it is not a moral duty binding all men. Humanism can motivate neither morality nor life itself.

Not so with a consistent Christian theism. Not so with the Biblical view that includes heaven and hell. Although observable history shows that good people have endured pain and persecution, although it cannot be proved by this life that honesty is invariably the best policy, a future life with rewards and punishments meted out by an omnipotent and omniscient Sovereign clearly provides logical justification for choosing a life of righteousness at whatever temporal cost.

How selfish! the secularists deride; we always have said that Christianity is egoistic.

At this point the secularist must be brought back forcefully to his own position. How is it that he uses egoism as an accusation of moral inferiority? On humanistic principles what is wrong with egoism? Since a naturalistic worldview cannot justify any type of life, or even life itself, except as an expression of irrational personal preference, it has no more ground for objecting to Christianity than to communism.

The Christian view, however, includes much more than a bare belief in some sort of future rewards and punishments. It even goes beyond the notion of the immortality of the soul. Christianity teaches the resurrection of the body—a doctrine doubly based on information given us by God and an exemplification of it in the historic event of Christ's rising from the tomb.

Then at that great future day all the dead, both small and great, shall stand before the judgment seat of Christ; "for God hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world by that man whom he hath ordained;" "for the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son."

And, to conclude the Confession, "The end of God's appointing this day is for the manifestation of the glory of his mercy in the eternal salvation of the elect, and of his justice in the damnation of the reprobate, who are wicked and disobedient... As Christ would have us to be certainly persuaded that there shall be a day of judgment, both to deter all men from sin and for the greater consolation of the godly in their adversity; so will he have that day unknown to men, that they may shake off all carnal security and be always watchful because they know not at what hour the Lord will come, and may be ever prepared to say, Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly, Amen" (sections ii, iii).