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THE CREEDS OF CHRISTENDOM,

WITH

A HISTORY AND CRITICAL NOTES.

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IN THREE VOLUMES.

FOURTH EDITION—REVISED AND ENLARGED.

VOLUME III.

THE EVANGELICAL PROTESTANT CREEDS, WITH TRANSLATIONS.

NEW YORK:

HARPER & BROTHERS, FRANKLIN SQUARE.

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THE AUBURN DECLARATION. A.D. 1837.

[THE AUBURN DECLARATION, so called from the place of its adoption, belongs to the history of American Presbyterianism, and although it never aspired to the dignity of an authoritative Confession of Faith, it may claim a place here for its intrinsic value and importance before and after the disruption. It originated during the conflict which preceded the division of the Presbyterian Church into Old and New School, A.D. 1837, and was prepared by the Rev. BAXTER DICKINSON, D.D. (d. 1876). It had been charged, on one side, that sixteen errors, involving considerable departures from true Calvinism and the Westminster standards, had become current in that Church. (They are printed in the *Presbyterian Quarterly and Princeton Review* for 1876, pp. 7, 8.) In answer to this charge, the New School party were led to embody their belief on these points in a corresponding series of 'True Doctrines,' which were incorporated in their Protest, as presented to the General Assembly of 1837. These doctrinal statements were subsequently considered and adopted by an important representative convention at Auburn, New York, Aug., 1837, as expressing their matured views, and those of the churches and ministry represented by them, on the several topics involved. The Declaration thus adopted became, not indeed a creed, but an authoritative explanation of the interpretation given to the Westminster Symbols by the leading minds in the New School Church, as organized in 1838. It was in 1868 indorsed by the General Assembly (O. S.) as containing 'all the fundamentals of the Calvinistic Creed,' and this indorsement was one among the most effectual steps in bringing about the reunion of the two Churches in 1870. The document is rather a disavowal of imputed error than an exposition of revealed truth, and must be understood from the anthropological and soteriological controversies of that period of division now happily gone by.]

Both the ERRORS and the TRUE DOCTRINES may be found in the *Minutes* of the Assembly for 1837; also, in the *New Digest*, pp. 227-230. See also Art. on *The Auburn Declaration* by Prof. E. D. MORRIS, D.D., of Lane Seminary, in the *Presbyterian Quarterly and Princeton Review*, Jan. 1876, pp. 5-40.

The original document is deposited in the library of Lane Theol. Sem., Cincinnati, O. The text here given is an accurate copy from it, and was kindly furnished for this work by the Rev. E. D. MORRIS, D.D. The headings in brackets have been supplied by the editor.]

[PERMISSION OF SIN.]

1. God permitted the introduction of sin, not because he was unable to prevent it consistently with the moral freedom of his creatures, but for wise and benevolent reasons which he has not revealed.

[ELECTION.]

2. Election to eternal life is not founded on a foresight of faith and obedience, but is a sovereign act of God's mercy, whereby, according to the counsel of his own will, he has chosen some to salvation: 'yet so as thereby neither is violence offered to the will of the creatures, nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established;' nor does this gracious purpose ever take effect independently of faith and a holy life.

[FALL OF ADAM.]

3. By a divine constitution Adam was so the head and representative of the race that, as a consequence of his transgression, all mankind became morally corrupt, and liable to death, temporal and eternal.

[HEREDITARY SIN.]

4. Adam was created in the image of God, 'endued with knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness.' Infants come into the world not only destitute of these, but with a nature inclined to evil, and only evil.

[INFANTS INVOLVED IN THE MORAL RUIN.]

5. Brute animals sustain no such relation to the moral government of God as does the human family. Infants are a part of the human family, and their sufferings and death are to be accounted for on the ground of their being involved in the general moral ruin of the race, induced by the apostasy.

[UNIVERSAL NEED OF REDEMPTION.]

6. Original sin is a natural bias to evil, resulting from the first apostasy, leading invariably and certainly to actual transgression. And all infants, as well as adults, in order to be saved, need redemption by the blood of Christ, and regeneration by the Holy Ghost.

[IMPUTATION OF SIN AND RIGHTEOUSNESS.]

7. The sin of Adam is not imputed to his posterity in the sense of a literal transfer of personal qualities, acts, and demerit; but by reason of the sin of Adam, in his peculiar relation, the race are treated as if they had sinned. Nor is the righteousness of Christ imputed to his people in the sense of a literal transfer of personal qualities, acts, and merit; but by reason of his righteousness in *his* peculiar relation they are treated as if they were righteous.

[ATONEMENT OF CHRIST.]

8. The sufferings of Christ were not symbolical, governmental, and instructive only; but were truly vicarious, *i. e.*, a substitute for the punishment due to transgressors. And while Christ did not suffer the literal penalty of the law, involving remorse of conscience and the pains of hell, he did offer a sacrifice which infinite wisdom saw to be a full equivalent. And by virtue of this atonement, overtures of mercy are sincerely made to the race, and salvation secured to all who believe

[MORAL INABILITY.]

9. While sinners have all the faculties necessary to a perfect moral agency and a just accountability, such is their love of sin and opposition to God and his law, that, independently of the renewing influence or almighty energy of the Holy Spirit, they never will comply with the commands of God.

[INTERCESSION OF CHRIST.]

10. The intercession of Christ for the elect is previous, as well as subsequent, to their regeneration, as appears from the following Scripture, viz.: 'I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me, for they are thine. Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word' (John xvii. 9, 20).

[SAVING FAITH.]

11. Saving faith is an intelligent and cordial assent to the testimony of God concerning his Son, implying reliance on Christ alone for pardon and eternal life; and in all cases it is an effect of the special operations of the Holy Spirit.

[REGENERATION.]

12. Regeneration is a radical change of heart, produced by the special operations of the Holy Spirit, 'determining the sinner to that which is good,' and is in all cases instantaneous.

[SALVATION BY GRACE.]

13. While repentance for sin and faith in Christ are indispensable to salvation, all who are saved are indebted, from first to last, to the grace and Spirit of God. And the reason that God does not save all is not that he wants the *power* to do it, but that in his wisdom he does not see fit to exert that power further than he actually does.

[LIBERTY OF THE WILL.]

14. While the liberty of the will is not impaired, nor the established connection betwixt means and end broken, by any action of God on the mind, he can influence it according to his pleasure, and does effectually determine it to good in all cases of true conversion.

[JUSTIFICATION.]

15. All believers are justified, not on the ground of personal merit, but solely on the ground of the obedience and death, or, in other words, the righteousness of Christ. And while that righteousness does not become theirs, in the sense of a literal transfer of personal qualities and merit, yet from respect to it God can and does treat them as if they were righteous.

[FREEDOM IN FAITH AND UNBELIEF.]

16. While all such as reject the Gospel of Christ do it, not by coercion, but freely, and all who embrace it do it not by coercion, but freely, the reason why some differ from others is that *God* has made them to differ.