

# THE PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL REVIEW.

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## I.

### THE ALLEGED LEGALISM IN PAUL'S DOCTRINE OF JUSTIFICATION.

COMPARISONS between the teaching of Paul and the teaching of Jesus are the fashion of the day. A purely historical and a practical motive combine to lend interest to these comparisons. Prompted by whichever motive, the problem sought to be solved by them is the continuity or non-continuity of the religious impulse which shaped the origin of Christianity. The historian asks: Were two distinct forces introduced, the one by Jesus, the other by Paul? Or must we say that, on the whole, Paul's work lay in the line of the further carrying out of the principle introduced by Christ? If the former, can we determine the exact relation of difference or perhaps even heterogeneity in which the two stood to each other? Can we trace the interaction between them in their subsequent development, the degree in which each contributed toward the final result, and the mission which in virtue of this final result Christianity has since then accomplished in the world? If the latter, can we point out the unity of fundamental principle in the variety of doctrinal formulation? Can we draw the lines which run from the centre posited by Jesus to the several points of the wide circumference along which we observe the versatile and comprehensive religious genius of Paul moving? To the practical mind, on the other hand, this same problem of continuity, or lack of continuity, appears of decisive importance for the attitude to be assumed toward the modern attempt to supplant the theology of the Reformation, so largely based on Paul, by a less elaborate, less speculative, more congenial, be-

## VIII.

### THE PROPOSED AMENDMENTS AND ADDITIONS TO THE TEXT OF THE CONFESSION.

IT will be hardly questioned that the Confession of Faith stands pre-eminent among the doctrinal standards of the Churches known under the general name of the Reformed. It constitutes a common standard for an important group of Churches in Great Britain and the United States, and a bond of fellowship among them. The Church which undertakes to amend the text, or to make additions, obviously assumes a grave responsibility.

A proposition now lies before our Church to add a new chapter on the Holy Spirit and one on the Love of God and Missions. Before a well-grounded claim for the admission of these chapters can be made it must be shown (*a*) that there are at present omissions which call for additions to the text; and (*b*) that the additions proposed are stated with theological accuracy, and are in harmony with the general teachings of the Confession.

Applying this test to the new chapter on the Holy Spirit, we find, by careful comparison, that the Confession is not found guilty of omissions; and that its statements as to the nature, office and work of the Holy Spirit are much more abundant, and expressed with far more theological accuracy and propriety of diction, than the statements of the proposed chapter. This fact has been abundantly set forth in many articles on the subject, and we cannot find that any satisfactory reply has been made to the criticisms offered.

Applying the same test to the proposed chapter on "The Love of God and Missions," we compare what seem to us the cold and lifeless phrases of this chapter with the full exposition of the Confession, in which God the Father is described as, in his nature, most loving, gracious, merciful, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin, and rewarding them that diligently seek him; as manifesting an infinite goodness in his providence, which reaches in general to all his creatures, as directing, disposing and governing all creatures, all actions and all things to the praise of the glory of his goodness and mercy, as well as of his attributes of wisdom, power and justice; and, to crown all, so

constituting the Covenant of Grace as to make a free offer therein of life and salvation to sinners without limitation, making faith both a privilege and a duty, and solemnly requiring every minister to publish the doctrine of faith and repentance, so that all who hear the message may turn from all their sins unto God, being moved so to do by "the apprehension of his mercy in Christ to such as are penitent"; thus providing that the Covenant of Grace shall be "held forth in fulness, evidence and spiritual efficacy to all nations, both Jews and Gentiles," and exacting of his people that they continually offer prayer "for all sorts of men living, or that shall live hereafter" (Conf., chap. ii, 1; v, 4, 5, 7; vii, 3, 6; xv, 1, 2; xxi, 4). The Confession plainly teaches that if wicked men perish, it is by no arbitrary decree, but by their own fault, not knowing God who reveals himself in nature and grace, and obeying not the gospel of Jesus Christ (chap. i, 1, 4; vii, 3; ix, 1; xxxiii, 2).

The new chapter, moreover, utterly fails to draw the important distinction between God's love of compassion for the degraded, the impenitent, the hypocritical, the lost, and the love of complacency which he cherishes for the Church of the redeemed, in whom he is to find his delight forever.

It seems to us to be clearly demonstrable that the new chapters are entirely unnecessary, and, in addition, theologically inexact, and therefore quite unworthy of the place proposed for them in the Confession.

If we turn now to the proposed revision of section 7 in chapter xvi of the Confession which treats of works done by unregenerate men, we find the sentences so transposed that no longer sin, but only deficiency is charged: the charge of sin being brought only against the entire omission of works which God requires. Thus it is proposed to make the Confession inconsistent with its own teachings with regard to total depravity and original sin; inconsistent with the clear statements of other Reformed Confessions; inconsistent with all that the Bible teaches about the pollution which attaches to all that proceeds from the natural heart, the "flesh," in which "dwelleth no good thing"; inconsistent with the solemn warning of Christ that men are destitute of life until in vital relationship with him (John, vi. 53), and that he will utterly refuse to recognize the good works of men as acceptable in his sight unless wrought under the inspiration of that relationship. "Then will I profess unto them, I never knew you" (Matt. vii. 22, 23).

We have no particular zeal about the proposed change in the section relating to the Pope.

There seems to us to have been no sufficient reason, however, for proposing a change in the chapter on Lawful Oaths and Vows.

Oath-bound testimony is at the very foundation of the administration of justice. The magistrate is the minister of God, deriving all his authority from him. The Confession most correctly teaches that a Christian should assist the magistrate by giving testimony in important matters, and with that sanction which gives validity to testimony, as taught throughout the Bible, and as recognized in all the civilized world through the ages. It declares that "an oath is warranted by the Word of God, under the New Testament, as well as under the Old; so a lawful oath, being imposed by lawful authority, in such matters, ought to be taken." We regard the position thus defined to be incontrovertibly true. If then Christians *ought* to act thus, under the given circumstances, it is a certain inference that they sin when they refuse so to act. And yet the Church is asked to deny the validity of this certain inference by striking out the clause which affirms that it is a sin for a Christian to refuse to do what he ought to do. Is it really no sin to refuse to comply with a moral obligation?

PHILADELPHIA, PA.

EDWARD B. HODGE.