

THE  
AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN  
REVIEW.

---

THIRD SERIES. No. II.—APRIL, 1869.

---

ART. I.—RECENT DISCOVERIES IN GEOLOGY.

THE AQUEOUS FORMATION OF GRANITE AND CONSEQUENT REVOLUTION IN GEOLOGY.

By Rev. ROBERT PATTERSON, D. D., Chicago, Ill.

It is the custom of a certain class of writers to contrast religion, as a mere collection of speculative opinions, with science, and especially with geological science, as consisting of a body of well-ascertained facts. They argue the necessary conquest of faith by science, and the substitution of Murchison for Moses, and of Lyell for Christ, on the ground of superior authority. But this flippant contrast displays no profound acquaintance with either religion or science. For religion consists, not merely of dogmas, but of a body of facts, well-ascertained, in the very same way as the facts of science are ascertained, by the observation of competent observers, and the experiments of inquirers, and believed on the very same grounds on which all science is believed, namely, on the testimony of the observers. There is not one of our readers who has any other basis of belief for his A, B, C, or for any subsequent acquisition in geography, astronomy, geology, or any other science, than faith in the testimony of his teachers.

On the other hand, science does not consist in the knowledge of a heterogeneous collection of facts, but in an arrangement of facts according to a system or theory. The greater

“The mountains shall depart and the hills be removed, but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee.” “We, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness.” “The tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away.”

---

#### ART. II—THE REFORMED OR CALVINISTIC SENSE.

By E. D. MORRIS, D. D., Professor in Lane Seminary, Ohio.

It was a noble desire of Henderson, one of the Scottish representatives in the Westminster Assembly, that the transactions of that venerable body should not only become effectual in uniting the evangelical churches of the three kingdoms, but should also prove the basis of a grand Protestant Union, embracing the various branches of the Reformed Church throughout Northern and Central Europe. This desire was informally communicated by Henderson and some of his associates to the churches of Holland, and to the celebrated Openstiern, then Chancellor of Sweden; and for a time their suggestion became the subject of earnest negotiations among leading minds in the Reformed circles. Had such negotiations eventuated in action—had such a general Union been formed on the basis of a sound, just, fraternal Calvinism, the subsequent career of the various European churches bearing the Calvinistic name, and the subsequent history of Protestantism itself, would have been essentially modified. The cunning arguments of Bossuet in view of the *variations* in that Protestantism—by which even the youthful Gibbon was at one time led to sympathize with the Papal faith—would then have been fatally weakened. The visible unity of these churches

on such a foundation would not only have rendered such criticism ineffective, but also have furnished the surest protection against all other forms of Papal assault. It would have afforded to a free and spiritual Christianity a much more firm and advantageous position in the several countries, and among the various nationalities, represented in such Union. It would have obliterated by degrees those diversities of doctrine and of sentiment, which had originated in local causes merely; it would have enabled the several parties and sections to know and understand, to respect and love, one another. It would have tended to draw the Reformed and the Lutheran churches into closer fellowship, and to return the divided stream of the Reformation into one broad, deep, fertilizing current. It might have been an introductory and decisive step toward that comprehensive communion of saints, and that unifying of the Body of Christ, for which devout souls in our day are longing, and which all believers recognize as a condition precedent to the dawning of the millennial age.

The failure of these negotiations may be traced in part to external causes: diversities of race and language, varieties of temperament, culture, usage, and especially political policies and interests, stood in the way of such union, and frustrated every ardent endeavor to secure it. It is traceable partly to internal causes, existing in the constitution or incorporated in the belief of the various Reformed churches; found in the ambition of leading minds, or in the intestine strifes of party, or the complications of state control. If the external conditions had been favorable to Union, the sentiment of brotherhood had not attained such maturity, neither had the principles or the advantages of such Union been so far appreciated as to render the actual combination of all the Calvinistic churches, on the basis of any single creed, either practicable or desirable. If such appreciations had existed, and this sentiment of brotherhood had been far more widely diffused and more controlling, it still is questionable whether these external hindrances would not have presented an insuperable barrier to the Union sought. These causes, external and internal, not only prevented the churches of Holland and London, Switzerland and France,

from joining in such an alliance; they even precluded such an alliance among the several evangelical parties within the British Isles. The Reformed churches, therefore, remained in the state of separation, disintegrate and variant; and Bossuet found the specious occasion he desired, to show the schismatic character of Protestantism, and to prove that in Rome alone true unity, real concord, were to be found.

Among these obstructing causes, it should be specially observed that diversities in doctrine occupied only a subordinate place. The Westminster Confession had gathered into itself, and had considerably set forth, all that was essential in the various Reformed symbols which had preceded it; it had incorporated even more fully than the Heidelberg Catechism or the Helvetic Confessions, the substance of that strong, vital, indestructible Calvinism, which was the common life and glory of the Reformed churches. It had been framed amid circumstances which preserved it from the incompleteness, the narrowness, the partizanship, characteristic of some among the antecedent Confessions. It could therefore claim to be, in no ordinary sense, a representative expression of the doctrines embraced and held within the Calvinistic household; and to furnish a solid and spacious platform on which the various branches of that household might stand and rejoice together, as such an expression and such a platform. Henderson and his associates presented it to their brethren of like faith throughout Northern Europe; and if other causes had permitted on any basis the fraternal union thus desired, we may be assured that the Reformers would generally have recognized this Confession as both the latest and the best exposition of their common faith.

I. This view of the Westminster Confession may be illustrated by *an enumeration and survey of the various Calvinistic symbols which had preceded it*, during the seventeenth and sixteenth centuries. Passing backward from the years 1646-48, when the Confession was finished by the Assembly, and submitted to the inspection of Parliament, we find the first of these symbols in the *Canons of the Synod of Dort*, first authoritatively promulgated in 1619, as containing the

accepted doctrine of the Reformed Church throughout the Netherlands. This Synod, although composed mainly of representatives from that Church, might almost be regarded as ecumenical, inasmuch as it contained delegates from Sweden, from different parts of Germany, from France and Switzerland, and even from England and Scotland. Convened primarily by the authority of Maurice of Orange, for the purpose of arresting the growing influence of Arminianism, then entrenched in the University of Leyden, it still aimed to be a body representing the entire circle of Calvinistic opinion; and its canons, though directed mainly against the Remonstrant party, and unhappily affected with the controversy with them, may still be accepted as an important representation of the Calvinistic faith.

The year 1571 is memorable as the date of three national creeds, prepared independently of each other, and characterized by provincial peculiarities, yet combining remarkably to illustrate the degree of unity in doctrine prevalent among the Reformed churches. The first of these is the *Belgic Confession*, originally drafted ten years earlier, as a private declaration of belief, but at this date revised and adopted by the churches of Holland; a symbol closely connected therefore with the canons of the Synod of Dort, and by that Synod subsequently ratified as a valuable exposition of sacred truth. The second is the *Gallic Confession*, first composed in 1559, by a Synod representing the Calvinistic churches of France, and convened at Paris, but finally approved, and made the formal basis of French Protestantism, twelve years later, at Rochelle. The third of these provincial symbols is the *Thirty-Nine Articles* of the Church of England; drafted at first by Cranmer and Ridley, and adopted by act of Synod in 1552, then revised by the bishops of the English Church, and accepted by Synod in 1562, and finally sanctioned by Parliament in the year already given; a symbol in substantial harmony with the other Calvinistic Confessions of that era as to doctrine, but proclaiming the prelatical polity, and verging toward Lutheranism in its conception of the sacraments.

With this triad of Reformed symbols, there should be asso-

ciated a second triad, promulgated a few years earlier, and, like these, independent and provincial, yet historically and in their essential features closely allied both to these and to one another; namely, the *Scotch Confession*, the second or main *Helvetic Confession*, and the *Hiedelberg Catechism*. Of these the first was but the transplantation into Scottish soil of that system of divine truth, which the vivid brain and earnest heart of John Knox had learned in the society of Calvin at Geneva, and which he had so preached after his return, as to set all Scotland in a glow of fervid approbation. The second may be regarded as the maturest product of the Genevan school of theology, in the decade immediately succeeding the decease of Calvin; a symbol afterwards condensed into several local Confessions, and in its full form widely accepted, not merely in Switzerland, but also in Hungary, Poland and France. The third had its origin in the struggles of Calvinistic princes to establish the Reformed faith, instead of Lutheranism, throughout the Palatinate; and is characterized by a remarkable degree of moderation in statement, and of conciliation in tone. "In doctrine," says another, "it teaches justification with the Lutheran glow and vitality, predestination and election with Calvinistic firmness and self-consistency, and the Zwinglian theory of the sacraments with decision."

Following the ascending line of Calvinistic symbolism to a point still closer to the era of the Reformation, and passing by the two minor Confessions proposed by Calvin himself in exposition of certain particular doctrines, we are brought to a third triad of creeds or symbols, historically connected with those already named, and of special interest as indicating the first formal divergence, in respect of doctrine, between the Reformed and the Lutheran churches: the *First Helvetic* or *Second Basle Confession*, subscribed by the seven Protestant cantons of Switzerland in 1536, the *First Basle Confession*, adopted by the cities of Basle and Mülhausen in 1532, and the *Fidei Ratio* written by Zwingli in 1530. This primary group of Reformed symbols, all of Swiss origin, are the products of that formative period, when both the Helvetic and the German reformers were still struggling together against the might of the

Papacy, and while their differences were confined mainly to the single question of the sacraments. They are of special value, on one side, as indicating the degree of harmony in belief, as well as in feeling, between the Reformed and the Lutheran churches; the one first named having been submitted to the Lutheran party at Wurtemberg and at Smalcald, as an adequate basis of unity or of concord for the entire Protestant movement. They possess even greater value on the other side, as showing what the Reformed church was in its earliest stages, and what were the germs from which its more mature expressions of faith have sprung.

II. A proper appreciation of this remarkable series of symbols, as containing a consistent and valid system of doctrine, requires some recognition of their *relations to antecedent and to contemporaneous symbolism*. In a Confession drafted by Calvin in 1562, in the name of the Protestant churches of France, but which was never formally adopted by any of the Reformed organizations, he declares that "on all the articles which have been decided by ancient Councils, touching the infinite spiritual essence of God, and the distinction of the three Persons, and the union of two natures in our Lord Jesus Christ, we receive and agree in all that was therein resolved, as being drawn from the Holy Scriptures." In like manner the Reformers generally, whether Calvinistic or Lutheran, were content to appeal to the Nicene and Athanasian Creeds, as well as to that bearing the name of the Apostles, as decisive authority on all trinitarian and christological questions. They accept, also, in general, the Augustinian in distinction from the Pelagian anthropology, including both the primitive creation in righteousness and the subsequent fall, and also the consequent depravity and helplessness and guilt of mankind. On all of these important points, the Protestant symbols were articulated vitally upon what had been the common faith of the church from the days of Augustine and Athanasius. They not only excluded the false soteriology, and the still more false morality, which had crept into the Church under the Papal régime; they also went back of the Papacy to the period of more pure and more primitive conviction, and joined

themselves historically to those primary beliefs, which an awakened Christian consciousness had first been engaged in framing, and on which the Church for twelve centuries, even amid Romish corruptions, had been reposing.\*

This recognized connection with the early Christian faith—this cordial acceptance of the precious heritage which had thus descended from the primitive centuries of Christianity, will account, on the one hand, for the comparative absence in the Protestant symbols of elaborate statements in respect to those theological and christological questions which had so greatly absorbed the interest of the Church during the fourth and fifth centuries. The Reformers were content to receive, with little more than a correct translation into the current speech, the doctrines which had been settled at Nice and Ephesus and Chalcedon; and when those doctrines were subsequently assailed by the ancient heresies arrayed in more modern dress, they were still content with the repetition, in language suited to the times, of the decisive answer which the primitive church had given. On the other hand, this fact will account in large degree for the manner in which their various Confessions were constructed; and especially for the form in which the central doctrine of those Confessions—the doctrine of justification by faith in Jesus—was presented. That grand truth was a direct and irresistible deduction from these primary beliefs; it was the sublime consequence of what the early church had thought and declared concerning the Saviour, and the need of redemption through Him; and in thus presenting it, in wide contrast with the unhistoric and illogical dogma of Rome, as the *articula vel stantis vel cadentis ecclesie*, the Reformers, both Lutheran and Calvinistic, were simply

---

\* The testimony of the Catholic Moeher is significant on this point: "The Apostolic, Nicene and Athanasian creeds, and in general all the doctrinal decrees which the first four general Councils have laid down, in respect to the Trinity and to the Person of Christ, those Protestants who are faithful to their church recognize in common with Catholics. On this point the Lutherans, at the commencement of the Augsburg Confession, as well as in the Smalcald Articles, solemnly declared their belief. No less explicit and public were the declarations of the Reformed. These formularies constitute the common property of the separate churches—the precious dowry which the overwise daughters carried away with them from the maternal house to their new settlements." *Symbolism*. p. 11.



proving themselves to be the true descendants of the primitive Fathers, and the true heirs and possessors of the primitive faith.

In respect to this doctrine, as well as to the ancient beliefs on which it reposed, the Lutheran and Calvinistic Symbols were in substantial harmony. On other points they differed, especially on the nature and office of the sacraments, and on the elective decrees and elective grace of God in their bearings on human redemption. The unhappy controversy concerning the Eucharist, led by degrees to diversities of sentiment on related topics, and to a gradual separation, in doctrine as well as in organization, between these two sections of the Protestant host. Between the Gallic or Belgic Confessions, and the *Formula Concordiæ*, issued a few years later, as a formal exposition of matured Lutheranism, we discover a much wider difference, not in the sacramentarian question merely, than is apparent in any comparison of the Augsburg Confession with any Reformed formulary of that earlier era. Notwithstanding the distance and the alienation, which varieties of nationality and taste and training, and other kindred causes, were continually tending to develop among the Reformers, their hearts at first were constantly aspiring after unity, in faith as well as in feeling. Luther and Calvin were closely and cordially agreed upon the really fundamental points in theology; and wherein they differed, they still were conscious of standing within the broad circumference of the same system of sacred truth. Calvin declared, in respect to the Augsburg Confession, that it was his pride willingly and cheerfully to subscribe it; and to the close of his life he shared with Melancthon in the ardent desire to exalt the points of agreement, to the relative suppression of the points of difference, between the two great branches of the Protestant household.\*

The Reformed symbolism was thus vitally connected both

---

\* It has well been said, that "Melancthon was a man of peace in the midst of war, and a man of union in the midst of discords." Better than any other among the leading Reformers, he represents the tendency toward union within the circle of Protestantism. In the later years of his life, he was constantly acting as a mediator, in respect to theological opinion, between the Lutheran and Calvinistic parties. His prevalent feeling was once revealed in the words: "If my eyes were a fountain of tears, rich as the waters of the river Elbe, I

with the established belief of primitive times, and with the best convictions, on all essential points, of those who gave form to the Lutheran faith. It started from a genuine and vigorous stock; it grew in good soil, and under healthful conditions. It inherited the purest life, the noblest inspiration, the most substantial treasures of the past; it received into itself the best thoughts, and shared the holiest sympathies, of those to whom God had given the great task of emancipating the Church from Papal thralldom, and whom he had endowed with mental and spiritual capacities adequate to their high vocation. It is well to bear these connections in mind, for it has justly been said that "comparative symbolism is to theology what comparative anatomy is to physical science, or what comparative philology is to the science of language."

III. Reverting now to the Reformed, in distinction from the Patristic or Lutheran Symbols, and considering these in the chronological succession already indicated, we discover at once *an organic growth* in respect to the system of doctrine therein contained. From the Fidei Ratio to the Westminster Confession there is a steady advance, a healthful progress toward maturity, as apparent and as beautiful as that which transforms the sapling into the broad and sturdy tree. The Fidei Ratio lays the foundations for the Confession of Basle; the Confession of Basle becomes the basis of the first Helvetic Confession. The several Swiss symbols, springing as crystal fountains from their Alpine sources, pour their clear current into the creeds of the Palatinate of France and of distant Scotland; and these in time become tributary to those later canons and confessions, in which the Calvinistic system is regarded as having found its most complete expression.

---

could not sufficiently express my sorrow over the divisions and distractions of Christendom!"

With this sentiment Calvin was in complete sympathy. The desire for conciliation, for harmony of view as well as feeling, and even for a great Protestant Union, grew stronger and stronger in his breast. His correspondence with leading Reformers in other countries furnishes numerous illustrations of this fact. Among the Zurich letters, there is one, in response from Archbishop Cranmer, urging the importance of harmony in teaching, and of concert in action, for the furtherance of the Protestant doctrine, and closing with the question: Shall we neglect to call together a Godly Synod, for the refutation of error, and for restoring and propagating the truth?

Geographically, this development began at Zürich and at Basle; thence it extended to the seven Protestant cantons, and embraced the whole of evangelized Switzerland; thence it penetrated northward and westward, like the widening rays of the morning, until it had comprehended France and the Palatinate: and still it grew broader and more comprehensive, until Holland and England, and even remote Scotland, were incircled by it. Limited by Lutheranism on the east, and by Rome on the south, it thus went forth from its Helvetic centre to plant its standards in the north and west, and to bear its noble part in the subduing of these various nationalities unto Christ.

It began in like manner with individual effort; and in the independent reflections and declarations of men like Luther and Zwingli, and Bucer and Calvin and Knox. But no individual mind—not even that of the sage and scholar of Geneva—could fully comprehend or control it. In the second Helvetic Confession, the Swiss theologians were all associated; the Heidelberg Catechism, though proposed chiefly by Ursinus, was supervised by the bishops and ministry of the Palatinate; two successive synods of French Protestants set their imprimatur upon the Gallic Confession; the articles of Cranmer and Ridley received the endorsement of both bishops and synods, and the British Parliament, before they became the authorized faith of England. And in the Synod of Dort and the Westminster Assembly, we find the agency in this development becoming still more extensive and august, each of these Councils assuming national magnitude, and taking on in some aspects even an ecumenical importance.

There are some internal signs of such growth, which especially attract the observer. At first the Zwinglian doctrine concerning the sacraments, having been the primary occasion of diversity among the Reformers, was invested with a disproportionate prominence, and affirmed with excessive tenacity and zeal; but gradually we find it, without losing its distinctive character, settling into an appropriate place, and taking on its just proportions. At the beginning other doctrines, which now constitute essential parts of the Calvinistic system,

were either briefly stated or wholly omitted; but by degrees these claimed their legitimate positions, and were welcomed into the harmonious household of sacred truth. At the outset some tenets were set forth with less of expansion and less of precision than was requisite in symbols aiming at completeness; but gradually such definitions were enlarged, balanced, rounded out into appropriate symmetry. At first these Confessions were provincial in cast and form as well as in authoritativeness, framed to meet special exigencies, and restricted by the narrowness of the occasions that elicited them, and consequently unfitted for transportation from one province or state to another, and wholly incompetent to be the one universal creed of the various nations represented in the Reformed movement. But by degrees such an ecumenical element enters into them, and they grow into some measure of universality; the Catechism of Heidleburg and the Canons of Dort find acceptance in all Calvinistic circles; and the Confession of Westminster is not only received with respect wherever Calvinism has foothold in Europe, but becomes its revered symbol on a new continent, and is the accepted creed even of multitudes who reject the Presbyterian name.

IV. This organic growth is characterized by much of *circumstantial diversity*. In the preface to the "Variations," the subtle Bossuet traces such diversity to two related causes—one found in the liability of the human mind, after having once shaken off the restraints of divine authority, to become involved hopelessly in the mazes of rational speculation; the other revealed in the incapacity of such minds, after having agreed in rejecting the common standard of divine truth, and the common obligation to submit to its guidance, thenceforth to agree upon any given statement of sacred doctrine.\* He

\* "Catholic truth, proceeding from God, hath its perfection at once; heresy, a weak offspring of the human mind, can no otherwise be formed than of patched-up and ill-suiting parts. When, contrary to God's commandment, man ventures to remove the ancient land-marks set by his forefathers, and reform the doctrine received once amongst the faithful, he launches forth, without a thorough insight into all the consequences from what he first advanced; what a false twilight made him thus venture on, is afterwards found big with such inconsistencies as oblige these Reformers every day to reform themselves; nor can they know when their innovations will have an end, and they rest satisfied." *History of the Variations of the Protestant Churches*: Preface.

further points to the number of the Lutheran and Reformed Confessions, as evidence that no section of the Protestant party was able to present the truth in such a manner as to win the acceptance of the rest; and as decisive proof that all were wandering by various paths from the holy and catholic faith.

Against the Lutheran branch of that party, this charge must be pronounced invalid and unjust, since the several Lutheran symbols, from the Articles of Torgau to the Formula Concordiæ, were merely preparations for, or explanations of, the *Confessio Augusta* of Augsburg, in which the doctrine of the German churches received its substantial exposition. Whatever local or casual confessions sprang up within the limits of Lutheranism, beyond these preparatory or explanatory formularies, originated in geographical or political causes, indicating no vital want of harmony among the wise and earnest minds by whom this exposition of doctrine was conducted—and so far as the number and the variety of the Reformed symbols are concerned, we shall find the explanation mainly in such external causes; we shall recognize outward occasions leading to such diversity, and perhaps necessitating it, while at the same time no essential variations or contradictions are developed in the process.

Lutheranism was German—limited chiefly to a single nationality, held together by one language, and by numberless other agencies, which almost made it necessary that the Protestant movement within its borders should be one and indivisible. The Reformed churches were spread through several nationalities, differing in speech and usage, unlike in civil and social condition, and widely separated from one another. They were divided by geographical and political lines; and their local and provincial organizations naturally accepted the boundaries of the state as their proper limit. Switzerland furnished one sphere of development and France another; the Palatinate and the Netherlands were separate from these, and from one another; while the churches of England and Scotland, divided from the rest by influences broader than the seas that flowed between, assumed of necessity an independent attitude, and framed the common doctrine in a language and style peculiar to themselves.

This necessity becomes the more obvious, and the less significant as a basis of criticism, when we remember how greatly the entire Protestant movement was effected and embarrassed by political complications. The relations subsisting between the Church and the State were too intimate on the one side, and too vague and indeterminate on the other: the idea of a complete separation was one which only the experience of two subsequent centuries could bring into view. The history of the era is therefore a history of continual interference by the civil authorities, not merely with questions of organization, but even with views and expositions of doctrine. Princes assumed the right to call councils, and then to influence or control their action; kings took upon themselves the responsibility of providing creeds for their subjects. As the various churches in each province or nation were constituted one church, each of these provincial or national churches naturally constructed its own Confession; and thus the Reformed doctrine assumed many forms, varying in language and style, in the relative adjustment of particular tenets, and in the measure of completeness attained. Such variety was inevitable under the circumstances; and when Bossuet demanded that these multiplied churches and organizations, scattered throughout Western and Northern Europe, separated by diversities of language and custom, divided by broad political lines, unfamiliar with one another, and involved in the earnest struggles and labors incident to such a movement as Protestantism then was, should spontaneously agree upon one single Confession of Faith, this demand was both unreasonable and unjust.

It may be freely admitted, also, that the influence of individual minds, thinking and acting independently of each other, and sometimes in unconscious or open opposition, tended to develop such multiplicity and variety in doctrinal statement. While, on the one hand, we are interested in watching the reciprocal action of such minds, and in noting how far the strong and absorbing devotion to one great, central truth drew them into union, we should also recognize their strict individualism, their comparative isolation, and even their positive antagonisms. The mutual trust and love of men so unlike as Lu-

ther and Melancthon testify in no ordinary sense to their essential oneness in Christ ; the collisions in sentiment and feeling between men like Luther and Zwingle were but the natural outgrowth of differences inherent in their constitution, and cultivated by widely varied experiences. Such collisions were far less frequent and less serious than any candid student of human nature would have anticipated ; and in the manner in which they were checked or repressed, the believer in the reconciling agency of the Holy Spirit may find touching confirmation of his faith. But simple isolation in space and in time doubtless tended far more decidedly than such personal antagonisms to produce the variety in doctrinal opinion, illustrated in the Reformed symbols. The distance between Geneva and Edinburgh, between Wittenberg and Leyden, was then a hundred fold greater than now ; and the intercommunication between minds thus separated geographically was then obstructed in similar ratio. A corresponding distance in time separated Luther from John Knox, Zwingle and Bucer from Nesinus and Olivianus, Heidegger and Turretin from the leading minds in the Synod of Dort. And these separating occasions, geographic and otherwise, induced of necessity corresponding varieties, not only in forms of expression and in the mere structure of belief, but even in shades of doctrine and the real essence of the faith. To expect any other development than this under such conditions, is a mistake into which a mind so clear and profound as that of Bossuet could never have fallen ; his demand for complete unity must have been as insincere as it was unphilosophic.

No friend of the Reformed doctrine need hesitate, on the other hand, to admit the existence of internal as well as external occasions for diversity in the Calvinistic symbols. Some individuals, and some branches of the Reformed Church, for example, accepted more distinctively, and applied more thoroughly than others, the Augustinian theory of human nature. While all were agreed in rejecting Pelagianism, even in its milder and more plausible forms, and were substantially one in their convictions respecting the fall and depravity and guilt of mankind, they differed somewhat in the degree of stress

and stringency with which they presented the received truth. In like manner, some accepted more positively than others, and more carefully carried out to their logical results, the views of divine sovereignty and control which lay at the foundation of the theology of Calvin, and in which that theology diverged most widely from the teaching of the later Lutheranism. Some were inclined, like the authors of the Catechism of Heidelberg, to state these doctrines, and those logically consequent upon them, in the most conciliatory form, and for the purpose of securing the assent of thoughtful Lutherans as well as Calvinists; others were animated, like the Synod of Dort, by more of the polemic spirit, and impelled by the conscious necessity of drawing as broadly and plainly as possible the lines which separated Calvinism from the Arminianism then seeking to subvert it. The Reformers were not all cast in one mould, or placed in one set of circumstances. They differed in respect to logical capacity, comprehensiveness of vision, scholarly precision, and multiplied other characteristics, which were tributary to the framing of their several Confessions of Faith. They were greatly unlike both in natural temperament and in spiritual experience; their surroundings were as diversified as were the countries in which they lived; their preparatory training and discipline had been very dissimilar; diverse exigencies pressed at different periods upon the several branches or sections of the church; and many of their creeds were shaped to meet these immediate exigencies. Each branch or section had its own enemies, its own dangers, its own internal needs, and, consequently, its own answer to give to every man that sought a reason for the doctrine it maintained. The aggregate of such answers, historically compiled and collated, must therefore present no flat and dead uniformity, but rather an unique and suggestive variety, harmonizing spontaneously rather than by design, and strongly indicative in every part of the common life in Christ animating all alike.

V. In contrast with such variety in form and feature, the growth under examination must be regarded as *a growth in and toward unity*. The Reformed symbols present to our



view not merely a geographical contiguity, or a succession in time, or a series of independent products, standing together simply as the separate trees of one luxuriant forest. They are to be regarded rather as Calvinism, first in the blade, and then in the ear, and afterwards maturing into the full and perfect corn; as the successive stages and results of a process, which, if we may compare human things with divine, is not unlike that by which the Scriptures, under a multiplicity of form and through twenty centuries of time, grew by various authorship into that Book of books, whose indestructible unity becomes at last one of the clearest witnesses to its divine origin and mission.

Every intelligent mind appreciates the just distinction between the essence of a doctrine and its accidents or accessories; between the fact incorporated in a dogmatic statement and the theory or theories employed to account for that fact; between the essential truth affirmed in an article of belief and the explanations or illustrations introduced in exposition of the truth. One of the Reformed Confessions\* quaintly recognizes this distinction in its simple and yet decisive doctrine respecting Original Sin. After affirming that the posterity of Adam are affected by his fall in some way of hereditary contagion, rather than through mere example and imitation, as Pelagians were asserting, it adds the words: "*Nor do we deem it necessary to inquire just how this sinfulness passes from one to another; it is enough to believe that what God brought upon Adam, affected not himself merely, but likewise his entire race.*" In immediate opposition with this statement may be placed the recent affirmation of an eminent teacher of Calvinism, in our times: "Original Sin is one thing, the way in which it is accounted for is another. The doctrine is, that such is the relation between Adam and his posterity, that all mankind, descending from him by ordinary generation, are born in a state of sin and condemnation. Any man who admits this holds the doctrine."† Principal Cunningham, in his *Historical Theology*, affirms still more broadly,

---

\* Niemeyer. *Confessio Gallicana*: Art. x.

† Dr. Hodge in *Princeton Review*, July, 1867.

that no man pretends to be able to comprehend or explain the doctrine of the fall of Adam, and its bearing upon the present character and condition of men; that it involves mysteries which human reason, enlightened by divine revelation, can not fathom; and that, after all our study of Scripture, and all our investigation of the subject, we must resolve the matter into the divine sovereignty, and be content to say: "Even so, Father, for so it hath seemed good in thy sight."

The same distinction may be illustrated by reference to other doctrines in the Calvinistic system. We assert the fact of the divine sovereignty, and the antithetic fact of human freedom, and carefully incorporate both in our doctrinal belief; meanwhile accepting or rejecting any proposed explanation of the mystery involved in this combination, or bowing down before that sacred mystery with mute confession of our inability to solve it. We affirm the great fact of an election, as exhibited both in the providence and in the gracious dealings of God with men, while we differ as to the value of any specific exposition of the fact, or confess ourselves unable to elucidate, or even to comprehend it. We avow our faith in the presence and operations of the Holy Ghost, and confess our dependence upon him for every holy thought or righteous act; reverently casting ourselves upon his gracious interposition, though we can not recognise his presence by any sense, or penetrate in the least into the mystery of his efficiency. All the cardinal truths of our religion, and especially those which are essential parts of our Calvinistic belief, are like mountains, whose gilded summits we clearly see, and whose main outlines we more or less vaguely discern, but whose deep foundations lie concealed in the comprehending wisdom of him by whom the facts themselves were graciously revealed for our salvation. And while we welcome any explanations which human reason can give—while we rejoice in every suggestion of wise and sound philosophy, and forever linger around the vast problems involved in these cardinal truths, the essential and the sanctifying act in each case is an act of faith; and this act of faith embraces neither theory nor speculation, but the facts alone.

Viewed in the light of this distinction, the unity of the Reformed Symbols, so far as these specific doctrines are concerned, becomes very clear. The same note may be sounded by several different instruments, varying in structure and form; and the tone of each may be clearly discernible from those of the rest; while the ear of the listener plainly perceives that the sound, whether breathed from a flute or poured from an organ, is one and the same. As we hear the several notes which are combined in the grand and solemn octave of our Calvinistic faith, sounded forth from one creed after another, we spontaneously recognize the identity of each among these sacred tones, from whichever source it flows. The facts, the doctrines, the substantial verities presented as objects of faith, are ever the same, even while subordinate variations or diversities are apparent on every hand.

This growth in and toward unity is exhibited also in the progressive adjustment and combination of such separate truths or doctrines. The question of adjustment and combination engrossed, at the outset, but little attention. The minds of the earlier Reformers were occupied rather with the clear, positive, independent statement of those particular doctrines in which they differed from the Papacy, or varied among themselves. It was reserved for the organizing intellect of later leaders to bring these particular truths together, and to state them in their connections both with one another, and with those other verities which are united with these in the Gospel of Christ. And as there were differences in the degree of clearness, exactness, comprehensiveness, force, with which the truth was first stated particularly, so there were differences in the degree of success attained in the combining of these various elements in the several creeds constructed. The materials are in some cases less ample and less adequate than in others; the order of construction varies according to the plan and object of the architects; the completed edifice bears traces of the poverty and the peculiarities, as well as of the sublime faith, of its occupants.

And yet this question of adjustment and combination is one of vital importance in the scientific evolutions of Christian doc-

trine. Chemists tell us not only that exactly the same elements, united in different proportions, become in one combination indispensable to human life, and in another deleterious and destructive, but also that the same elements, united in the same proportions, but existing in one case as a vegetable growth, and in another as a chemical mixture, are in like manner healthful and nutritious in the first instance, but noxious or deadly in the other. A preacher may believe in all the essential doctrines of grace, and be recognized as orthodox on every point, and yet by his disproportionate presentation of any single doctrine or any class of doctrines, convey inadequate and even ruinous conceptions of the gospel as a whole. Such a preacher may hold and proclaim the doctrines of grace in due proportions, and yet his proclamation of them may be corrupted by a spirit so diverse from that of Christ, as to become a savor of death to those who hear him. In the study of the Reformed Symbolism, we detect a palpable and beautiful advance in both of these particulars. Proportion and symmetry on the one hand, are evidently the object of a growing desire: the harmonies of truth begin to be heard above the sounds of eager discussion: the whole of Sacred Doctrine is seen to be greater than any of its parts: and by degrees the Heidelberg Catechism and the Westminster Confession come into view, as the most complete and balanced, and therefore healthful and nutritious, expositions of the common faith. On the other hand, the baleful spirit of partizanship, tenacious of particular phases of thought, and devoted to some specific form of organization, gradually loses its power: polemic contests become less prominent and absorbing: dogmatism gives way before the sense of brotherhood: an improved type of religious experience softens, hallows, beautifies the creeds: and by degrees those creeds become, through many variations, the one Calvinistic Faith.

VI. Of this long process of growth or development in which the Reformed churches throughout Northern and Western Europe shared together during more than a century, *the Westminster Confession was both the latest and the most complete and perfect fruit.* Both historically and logically, it should

be regarded as the culmination of the entire series of Reformed Symbols. In the manner of its construction, in the completeness of its form, and in the spirit which animates it, as well as in its historical position and relations, it may fitly claim precedence above any antecedent Confession, and is justly deserving of the wider acceptance, and of the greater measure of authoritativeness, which it has attained wherever Calvinism is known or received.

Never since the Diet at Augsburg had a body of men been convened for any kindred purpose, who could compare in ability and in character with the Westminster Assembly. Though British in nationality, they were European in reputation, and ecumenical in influence. They were familiar with the peculiarities of the Reformed churches everywhere, and acquainted with the whole course of Calvinistic teaching and belief. Before them lay the scrolls on which were transcribed all that had been solemnly affirmed by other branches of the Reformed stock; around them were strewed the writings of those who had been the fathers and counsellors of the church for more than a century. They were happily removed to a safe distance from those unfavorable excitements by which the mind and hearts of many among the earlier advocates of Calvinism had been as frequently biased. They were surrounded by no such angry controversies—assailed by no such serious errors, as those which influenced so distinctly the decisions of the Synod of Dort. They were permitted to conduct their deliberations at great length, and in comparative peace; and their conclusions were framed with a degree of literary exactness, of philosophic system, of fraternal harmony, such as finds no counterpart in any preceding council. They were animated also by the hope that their action would not only secure the union of the Calvinistic churches in England and Scotland, but would likewise contribute to the visible combination and fellowship of all other churches bearing the Calvinistic name.\* And, as their work has shown, their

---

\* In the introductory sermon, preached by Dr. Lymington, at the Bicentenary of the Westminster Assembly, held at Edinburgh in 1843, the following sentences occur:

“They contemplated, besides a religious uniformity in the three kingdoms, a great Pro-

capacity was equal to their aims; their abilities were happily proportioned to their position, and to the great task Providentially assigned them. By culture and experience, as well as by occasion and appointment, they were admirably qualified for their work; and eight successive generations of Calvinists bear grateful witness to the success with which they performed it.

The Confession of Faith which these men framed, taken in conjunction with the Catechisms, contains a most exact, harmonious and complete statement of the Reformed doctrine. It is surpassed by none among the antecedent Confessions; the Catechism of Heidelberg alone may claim an equal recognition. In its definition of particular doctrines it avoids for the most part both the indefiniteness characteristic of some earlier symbols, and the exaggeration that defaces the decisions of the Synod of Dort. It generally presents specific truth, neither in the imagery of rhetoric nor in the tenacious phrases of dogmatism, but in the calm, sensible, convincing language of Christian wisdom. While it reduces some truths to a less conspicuous level, and omits certain affirmations of earlier creeds as not essential to the system, it introduces some incidental and explanatory statements which the earlier symbolism had not fully perceived. It aims to present the doctrines of grace in their logical succession, as well as in their individual completeness, and to adjust them to one another in such ways as to preserve the divine proportion and symmetry of the whole. The relations of doctrine to doctrine are more carefully indicated; the unity of the several members in the one body of faith is more diligently preserved; that faith is presented, not as a chemical mixture, but rather as an organic and healthful growth. Very little can be found in any antecedent Confession which is not as carefully incorporated and as happily expressed in this; the whole current of preceding

---

testant union among the nations of Christendom. . . . No sectarian prejudice, no weak partiality of kindred or of country, were permitted to freeze or confine the current of holy feeling that flowed in their bosoms. . . . They opened correspondence with foreign churches, and in the largeness and warmth of their affections formed schemes of co-operation and intercourse, which they were not permitted to see realized. The Symbols they framed were so constructed as to exhibit a generous and catholic bearing, being equally adapted to the Church in Britain, on the continent of Europe, in the Republican States of America."<sup>7</sup>

symbolism seems to have been poured into this clarifying and distributing reservoir. And if we sometimes discover a lack of definiteness in statement, on one hand, or an excessive straining after philosophic exactness on the other—if we occasionally detect the influence of a particular type of speculation, or note the introduction of some theory in connection with a truth or fact—if here and there we see a lack of proportion, or an imperfection in the combination of antithetic elements—if we perceive that something of human infirmity and inadequacy mingles with this, as with all other transcripts by man of the word and truth of God—we may still greatly and reverently receive this noble Symbol, made venerable by two centuries of acceptance, as being the nearest approach which the mind of the Church has made as yet toward that Divine Original, on which our faith and hope ultimately and supremely repose.

There is one respect in which the Westminster Confession may especially claim the esteem of all who regard true piety as equally essential with sound doctrine, and who are disposed to test all creeds and symbols by the measure of spirituality pervading them. That company of grave men, illustrating in deportment as in dress the peculiar style of the age, proceeding in their work with such solemn dignity, and by their whole demeanor making still more reverend the venerable place where they were assembled, were by no means the cold, critical, scholastic theologians whom many have imagined. With few exceptions, they were intensely earnest, devout, spiritual men; and their convocations were characterized by no ordinary measure and glow of truly Christian devotion.\* And it is one of

---

\*We gain some insight into the religious condition of the Assembly, and into the spirit with which its members entered on the work before them, from the quaint record of Baillie, one of the Scotch commissioners, concerning a certain day of fasting: "After Dr. Zwise had begun with a brief prayer, Mr. Marshall prayed large two hours, most divinely, confessing the sins of the members of Assembly, in a wonderfully pathetic and prudent way. After, Dr. Arrowsmith preached one hour: then a psalm: thereafter Mr. Vines prayed two hours, and Mr. Palmer preached one hour, and Mr. Seaman prayed near two hours: then a psalm. After, Mr. Henderson brought them to a short, sweet conference of the heart-confessed and other seen faults to be remedied. Dr. Zwise closed with a short prayer and blessing. *And yet this day was the sweetest that I have seen in England.*"

the peculiar excellences of their Confession and Catechisms, that they are pervaded and sanctified by this spiritual quality, rising far above all mere accuracy or comprehensiveness of statement, and vitalizing the entire system or body of doctrine proclaimed therein. It is questionable whether they do not surpass all antecedent Confessions quite as much in this, as in their exposition of the common faith. There is indeed a certain ruder earnestness and fervor in some of these—a certain intensity of expression and display of personal convictions, for which we find no exact counterpart in the Westminster symbols: but these characteristics are counterbalanced by a maturity of experience, a calm elevation, a ripened and settled piety, which all must recognize as a still higher and nobler gift from God. And it may be further questioned, whether it be not the possession of this signal spirituality, quite as much as any doctrinal accuracy or completeness—this exhibition of the truth of God in forms and phrases, such as vital piety no less than sound theology suggests, which has given to these symbols such a special place in Christian hearts, and exalted them to such peculiar eminence among the accepted formularies of the Christian Church.

Such a confession as this, set in such historic relations, and interpreted by comparison with the Reformed symbols which preceded it, and poured their several contributions into it, may fitly claim the allegiance of all who call themselves by the Calvinistic, rather than the Arminian name. To ignore the historic origin of this Confession, or disregard the complex process of research, discussion, declaration, which went before it and made it possible—to interpret it without reference to that century of growth and conflict of which it was the bright, consummate flower, or accept it in any other than its proper historical sense as thus supplied, is a mistake of which no intelligent Calvinist should be guilty. A sound interpretation, a true and worthy acceptance of this Confession, involve sincere recognition and approval of that compact, massive, grand SYSTEM OF DOCTRINE which, in varying measure, was embodied in such antecedent symbols, and which has been so fully incorporated and matured in this; a recognition which heartily re-



ceives the system in every essential element, even while questioning merely incidental or explanatory features; an approval which embraces the substance of the doctrine, and rejoices in it, even while unable to accept such philosophic speculations as may be mingled therewith. So long as the integrity of that system, the unity and symmetry of that doctrine, are preserved by those who recognize and approve this Confession, such variety of judgment concerning what is speculative or incidental, and a corresponding variety in methods of stating or illustrating these precious verities, must be allowed, as a necessary concession to liberty of thought. Neither is it essential to presume that no traces of error are to be found in this noble Confession, or in the series of Confessions which culminated in it: since the Assembly are themselves careful to teach that synods and councils may err, and have erred; and that their decisions are therefore not to be taken as the *RULE* of faith or practice, but are rather to be used as helps in both practice and faith. Still less does such acceptance require us to assume that, while human language and human thought are constantly undergoing modifications under influences both natural and supernatural, no structural changes are ever to take place in this System of Doctrine, involving correspondent changes in the formulary that defines it. It is needful only that—leaving to the church of the future the expression of its own faith under the leadings of the Word and Spirit of God, allowing ample room for present inquiry and discussion, consenting to varieties of illustration and explanation within legitimate limits, and bearing and forbearing one another in love—we cordially receive and adopt this sublime Confession, in its plain historic sense and relations, as an adequate, authoritative, precious transcript of that System of Doctrine which all agree in accepting as contained, not in the writings of Calvin, but in the Holy Scriptures of God.