

**HANDBOOKS FOR BIBLE
CLASSES: THE WESTMINSTER
CONFESSION OF FAITH: WITH
INTRODUCTION AND NOTES**

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Handbooks for bible classes: The Westminster confession of faith: with introduction and notes
by Marcus Dods & Alexander Whyte & John Macpherson

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MARCUS DODS & ALEXANDER WHYTE & JOHN MACPHERSON

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EDITED BY
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AND
REV. ALEXANDER WHYTE, D.D.

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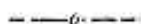
With Introduction and Notes

BY
THE REV. JOHN MACPHERSON, M.A.,
FINDHORN.

SECOND EDITION.

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PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION.

IN sending forth a new edition of this Handbook, I have little to say by way of preface. The announcement from the Publishers that the first issue was nearly exhausted came upon me unexpectedly, and I have not been able to give anything like a thorough revision to the book. Many friends have favoured me during the past year with communications regarding my work, from which, had more time been allowed, I might have profited more largely. I cannot forbear expressing my special indebtedness to Principal Douglas,—my only surviving divinity Professor,—who kindly called attention to certain imperfections in my notes, some of which I have endeavoured to correct in this new edition. The sale of a large issue within twelve months is to me peculiarly encouraging, as it shows that this Handbook has been the means of awakening considerable interest in the Westminster Confession, and giving a new impetus to its systematic study.

JOHN MACPIERSON,

FINDBORN, FORRES, 18th March 1882.

THE CONFESSION OF FAITH.



INTRODUCTION.

CHAPTER I.

THE PLACE AND PURPOSE OF CONFESSIONS OF FAITH.

1. *Confessions of Faith—Subordinate Standards.*—The Confession of Faith adopted by any church may be in certain respects compared to a set of rules accepted by an ordinary association as a term of membership. If these rules have been carefully and wisely drawn up, they will make prominent those principles which are specially to characterize the society; and reluctance on the part of any one to observe the fundamental articles of association would imply unwillingness to join or to remain in its membership. Society rules, however, may be purely arbitrary. Even if some reason may have determined their original adoption, this reason may be unknown to persons accepting them. It may not be a term of membership that each one who adopts the rules of the association must have acquainted himself with the grounds on which they rest, or the circumstances under which they were originally framed. To the members of such associations, the set of rules which they have adopted is their supreme standard of reference, and they have nothing to do with the source from which he who originally drafted them may have drawn. A Confession of Faith, however, is accepted by members of churches acknowledging it, simply as a subordinate standard. This designation in no way modifies its authority or relaxes the obligation of those who join the communion of the church by which it is received. The subordination intended is that of derivation. The members of the church receive the Confession as a statement of the truth contained in Scripture, and not as a document in itself authoritative apart from its scriptural ground. In entering into the communion of a church holding by any particular Confession, we not only agree to maintain the doctrinal positions therein contained, as the members of an association promise to observe the adopted rules, but we further make the affirmation that we hold the statement of doctrine in that Confession to be in