

**CALVINISM: PURE AND  
MIXED; A DEFENCE OF THE  
WESTMINSTER  
STANDARDS**

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Calvinism: Pure and Mixed; A Defence of the Westminster Standards by William G. T. Shedd

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**A DEFENCE**  
**OF THE**  
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BY  
**WILLIAM G. T. SHEDD, D.D.**

THE  
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## PREFACE

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THE object of this work is, to define and defend the tenets of Calvinism in their original purity and self-consistence, as distinguished from proposed modifications of them for the purpose of an alleged improvement. It has grown out of the proposal introduced into the Northern Presbyterian Church, to revise the Westminster Standards. It contains the substance of a pamphlet which the author published in opposition to this proposal when it was first made, together with discussions of several important subjects that have subsequently come up for examination during the controversy in the Church. Of these, preterition, common and special grace, original sin, infant salvation, the "larger hope," and the inerrancy of Scripture, are the most prominent. The controversy has disclosed the fact, that some Presbyterians deny that God may justly pass by any of mankind in the bestowment of saving grace; and assert that common grace may become saving grace by the sinner's co-operation, that original sin is not deserving of eternal death and therefore that infants are not liable to it, that the Westminster Standards teach that all the heathen are lost, and that the autographs of the inspired writers contained more or less of error. The writer endeavors to show that the first opinion is fatal to the doctrine of Divine sovereignty in election; that the second is Arminian syn-



ergism, not Calvinistic monergism; that the third destroys the doctrine of infant salvation, by making it only a quasi-salvation and a matter of obligation on the part of God; and that the fourth and fifth are misstatements of the contents of the Confession.

When the revision of the Standards was first suggested by a few presbyteries, the great majority of the denomination had expressed no desire for it, and the measure seemed to be the scheme of only a dissatisfied few. But it soon appeared that such dissatisfaction with the denominational creed was considerably widespread. The presbyteries voted to revise their creed by a decisive majority. This majority soon showed itself to be composed of a conservative and a radical wing. The former have endeavored to revise in conformity with the vote of the General Assembly, that no changes shall be made that impair the integrity of the Calvinistic system. The latter have proposed alterations, relating principally to the doctrines of election and preterition, which, the writer endeavors to prove, seriously impair it.

The history of the revision movement, thus far, confirms the author in his opinion, expressed at the very first, that the revision of a creed is *latitudinarian* in its nature and influence. The proposal to revise a creed is commonly made, not for the purpose of preserving its strictness, and still less to make it stricter, but in order to make it looser or more "liberal," as the phrase is. This explains the fact, that there has never been a revision of any of the great creeds of Christendom. When latitudinarian parties have arisen in the Church, and have attempted to change the received symbols, the result has been that new creeds were formed for the new parties, and the old remained unaltered. The Semi-Arians and Arians could not induce the Ancient Church to revise the Apostles',

Nicene, and Constantinopolitan creeds, in accordance with their views of an improved Trinitarianism. The Middle Ages witnessed no attempts to revise the great oecumenical symbols. None of the creeds of the Reformation, Lutheran or Calvinistic, have been revised. The only examples that border on revision are the Augsburg Variata and the Formula Concordiæ. The first was only the individual work of Melancthon, who wished to introduce synergism into the Lutheran monergism, and not that of a church demanding it; and the last claimed to be, and actually was, a closely reasoned and logical development of the Augsburg Confession—the only instance that we recall in which revision resulted in a stricter orthodoxy. The reduction of the Forty-two Articles of Edward the Sixth to the Thirty-nine Articles of Elizabeth, cannot be called a revision. The attempt of the Remonstrants to Arminianize the Heidelberg and Belgic Confessions was a failure, and resulted in the Five Articles of the new creed.

These facts go to show that revision, speaking generally, means the alteration of doctrinal statements by injecting into them more or less of foreign elements not properly belonging to them, in order to meet a change of views in a larger or smaller part of the denomination. By this method, Calvinism, or Arminianism, or Socinianism, or any creed whatever, becomes mixed instead of pure; a combination of dissimilar materials, instead of a simple uncompounded unity. This is the destruction of that self-consistence which is the necessary constituent of true science, and indispensable to permanent power and influence. The purest and most unmingled Socinianism, Arminianism, Lutheranism, or Calvinism, is the strongest in the long run.

While the author contends that such is the nature and tendency of creed-revision, he believes that many of those

who are advocating a revision of the Westminster Standards have no desire to weaken their statements or their influence. The distinction between doctrines and persons, projects and their advocates, is a valid one. One may have no confidence in a doctrine or project, and yet may have confidence in a particular advocate of it, because a person may be different in his spirit and intention from the nature and tendency of his doctrine or project, while this is a fixed quantity. Coleridge, in a conversation with a Unitarian friend, said: "I make the greatest difference between *ans* and *issns*. I should deal insincerely with you, if I said that I thought Unitarianism is Christianity; but God forbid that I should doubt that you and many other Unitarians are in a practical sense very good Christians." ("Table Talk," April 4, 1832.) When the opponent of revision asserts that revision is anti-Calvinistic in its logic and tendency, he does not assert that all of its advocates are anti-Calvinists. The writer believes that the natural effect of the proposed changes in the Confession, especially those of the radical wing, will be to weaken and break down the Calvinistic system contained in it, and endeavors to prove it; but he does not believe or say that this is the desire and intention of all who urge them.

The spirit of revision, it is said, is "in the air," and this is assigned as a reason why it should be stimulated and strengthened. This would also be a reason for the increase of malaria. It is undoubtedly true that the desire to revise the Calvinistic creed is pervading Pan-Presbyterianism to a degree not imagined at first. If it continues to increase, there can be little doubt that the historical Calvinism will be considerably modified; and doctrinal modification is an inclined plane. In an age of materialism in philosophy, and universalism in religion, when the Calvinistic type of doctrine is more violently