

know exactly what they want, it would be better not to touch the monumental formulas. And this contention has some weight. It seems almost impossible for theologians of the nineteenth century, who are dealing with a creed of the seventeenth, to make amendments in terms of the old symbol. The Westminster Confession belongs to an age whose spirit was different from our own; its methods of statement do not fit the moulds of our religious thought; it moves in a speculative realm into which we may indeed project ourselves, but only by a distinct and somewhat unnatural effort. When we consider the circumstances under which the Confession was framed, and the specific purposes which it had in view, it is just the kind of document which we would naturally expect it to be, and as regards its logical precision is not, I think, likely to be excelled in an age which does not take kindly to elaborate creed making.

My own personal conclusion, therefore, is, that it will be better to leave the Westminster Confession alone, and to formulate a new creed more simple and yet more comprehensive, and giving better expression to the religious thought of our time. The main point in debate is not so much whether the doctrines of the Westminster Confession are true or false, as whether they satisfactorily embody the great principles which underlie present religious thought and teaching; for the best creed, however venerable its associations, is not one which we lock up in a museum of history, but one which shows its radiant face amid daily doubts and trials. A perfect creed of the seventeenth century could not be expected to measure the religious thought of the nineteenth, unless God had ceased to teach us and man had ceased to learn. When such a wise and devout theologian as Dr. McCosh says, "There is a want in our Confession of a clear and prominent utterance, such as we have in the Scriptures, of the love of God to all men and the free gift of Christ to all men, not to the elect alone," he is not bidding us despise the Confession, but rather remember the inevitable limitations of time and circumstance, and the fallibility of mortal men. To insist that the new wine of truth shall go into the old bottles or be proscribed would be to repeat the tactics of mediaevalism. The creed of to-day, in whatever form we write it, will clearly recognize the great truth of the Fatherhood of God and the presence of God in the complex order of the material and spiritual universe: it will insist on the sacredness of human reason as equally a divine gift with the revelation presented before it: it will enlarge the realm of the supernatural until its