

THE "DIVINE DECREES" THE BACK-BONE.

The Rev. Dr. Shedd, Professor of Systematic Theology in the Union Theological Seminary--Presbyterian--when interviewed by a reporter of the *Tribune*, expressed himself freely against a revision of the Presbyterian Confession of Faith. He evidently sees that a revision means a general reform or the complete breaking up of the denomination. He fears this and opposes all reform of thought and expression. We give a part of the interview:--

Reporter.--"If they cannot agree to everything contained in the Book, would you favor a 'loose subscription,' signing with mental reservation?"

Dr. Shedd.--"I would choose the lesser evil and go for revision first. Some propose 'loose subscription' as a remedy for the ills complained of; that is, leave the standards as they are, and when candidates of lax or unsettled views present themselves for licensure or ordination, let them reserve certain parts which they cannot agree to sign. This is demoralizing and kills all simplicity and godly sincerity. Better a thousand times for a denomination to alter its creeds than to allow its ministry to 'palter with words in a double meaning;' than to permit an Arian subscription to the Nicene symbol, an Arminian subscription to the Westminster Confession, a Calvinist subscription to the Articles of Wesley, a Restorationist subscription to the doctrine of endless punishment."

Rep.--"Dr. Schaff says that he subscribed liberally to the Westminster Standards when he became a professor in the Union Seminary, after consulting with two prominent members of the faculty."

Dr. S.--"I noticed that statement and I failed to understand it, for according to the charter which governs the Board of Directors, no such thing as 'loose subscription' is known. I have been a professor in this seminary for twenty-six years, and once in every five years, the Board of Directors, who themselves subscribe to the Confession, have summoned me before them and, in accordance with the constitution, have required me to affirm, 'in the presence of God and of the directors of the Seminary,' that I 'solemnly and sincerely receive and adopt the Westminster Confession of Faith as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures.'"

WHAT WILL THE END BE?

Rep.--"If the question of revision carries in the Presbyteries, what will the end be?"

Dr. S.--"No living man can tell. And that is one of the points which I make against the whole matter. I am more interested in the abstract question of a revision than in the details of the problem. Revision is inexpedient, because there is no end of the process. It is like the letting out of water. The doctrine of the Divine Decrees is the particular one selected by the Presbytery whose request has brought the subject of revision before the General Assembly. *But this doctrine runs entirely through the Westminster documents, so that if changes were made merely in chapter iii. of the Confession, this chapter would be wholly out of harmony with the remainder. Effectual calling, regeneration, perseverance of the saints, are all linked in with the Divine Decrees.* The most cursory perusal will show that a revision of the Confession on this one subject would amount to an entire recasting of the creed."

Rep.--"The advocates of revision think their conservative brethren are needlessly alarmed."

Dr. S.--"It seems to me that they are not counting the cost of their advocating a revision. In representing the

Confession to be positively erroneous on two very important points, Dr. Van Dyke, for example, is proving too much. He is giving aid and comfort to the enemy. He is virtually telling the opponents of Calvinism that they are correct in their aspersions on the Westminster symbol; in their assertion that it is a hard and repellant system."

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