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REVISION NOT A NEW THING

In the recent interview with Professor Schaff, of the Union Theological Seminary, on the revision of the Creed, he advanced the argument that the defenders of the symbols were unduly exercised about the proposed changes, as though revision were a new thing, when, as a matter of fact, the Presbyterian Church of today is only moving along in the lines marked out by the fathers soon after the American Revolution. He said:

"A century ago there was an important change made in regard to the union of the Church and State. The old confession is based on such a union, and assigns to civil magistrates the power and the duty of protecting and supporting orthodoxy and of punishing heresy. The Westminster Assembly was itself the creature of the Long Parliament, and ejected 2,000 ministers from their benefices for non-conformity. The Westminster divines regarded toleration as a most dangerous error, and would have looked upon the separation of Church and State as down-right political atheism. The articles relating to the State had to be radically changed after the American Revolution. In the old Confession we find this section:

"The civil magistrate may not assume to himself the administration of the Word and sacraments, or the power of the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven; yet he hath authority, and it is his duty to take order, that unity and peace be preserved in the Church, that the truth of God be kept pure and entire, that all blasphemies and heresies be suppressed, all corruptions and abuses in worship and discipline prevented or reformed, and all ordinances of God duly settled, administered and observed. For the better effecting whereof, he hath power to call synods, to be present at them, and to provide that whatsoever is transacted in them be according to the mind of God.' [R1209 : page 7]

"In my 'Creeds of Christendom' I print this version of the Confession just quoted in a column parallel with that of the revised version [which reads thus]: –

"Civil magistrates may not assume to themselves the administration of the Word and sacraments, or the power of the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, or in the least interfere in matters of faith. Yet, as nursing fathers, it is the duty of the civil magistrate to protect the Church of our common Lord, without giving the preference to any denomination of Christians above the rest, in such a manner that all ecclesiastical persons whatever shall enjoy the full, free and unquestioned liberty of discharging every part of their functions, without violence or danger. And as Jesus Christ hath appointed a regular government and discipline in his Church, no law of any Commonwealth should interfere with, let or hinder the due exercise thereof among the voluntary members of any denomination of Christians, according to their own profession and belief," etc.
