

**VIEWS FROM THE WATCH TOWER.  
STILL DEBATING INFANT DAMNATION.**

IN DEBATES on creed revision among Presbyterians no feature has called forth such heated discussion as that relating to "elect infants dying in infancy." This clause of the Westminster Confession, with those clauses which have popularly been taken as interpreting it, follow: –

III. 3. "By the decree of God, for the manifestation of his glory, some men and angels are predestined unto everlasting life, and others foreordained to everlasting death.

III. 4. "These angels and men thus predestined and foreordained are particularly and unchangeably designed, and their number is so certain and definite that it can not either be increased or diminished.

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X. 3. "Elect infants, dying in infancy, are regenerated and saved through the Spirit, who worketh when, where, and how he pleaseth; so also are all other elect persons who are incapable of being called by the ministry of the Word.

X. 4. "Others, not elected, altho they may be called by the Word and may have some common operations of the Spirit, yet they never truly come to Christ and, therefore, can not be saved. Much less can men not professing the Christian religion be saved in any other way whatsoever, be they never so diligent to frame their lives according to the light of nature, and the law of that religion they do profess; and to assert and maintain that they may, is very pernicious and to be detested."

From a *remote period* these statements have been popularly supposed to teach, by implication, that non-elect infants dying in infancy are damned. However, the recent General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (South) claimed that no such interpretation could rightly be put upon the clause, and refused to consider a proposition to alter it. For instance, Dr. Warfield, of Princeton, says, "I think we may characterize the interpretation of Chapter X., section 3 [of the Westminster Confession], which finds a body of non-elect infants dying in infancy implied in its statements, as one of the most astonishing pieces of misrepresentation in literary history." Rev. Dr. Eugene Daniel also asserts that it is unjust to say that the Confession implicitly teaches the damnation of non-elect infants. He points out that it teaches *positively* the salvation of elect infants, but makes no attempt whatever to solve the Creator's intentions with regard to non-elect infants.

It seems peculiar indeed that anyone claiming to believe in Calvinistic *predestination* of adults could dispute that the same conditions prevailed in infancy. But hearken to other interpreters of the Westminster Confession, as follows: –

Rev. Dr. Horace L. Singleton (*The Homiletic Review*, September), states that prior to the Westminster Confession all of Christendom had believed that infants dying without baptism are *damned*, but that Confession took a step forward in asserting that *elect* infants, even if unbaptized, are saved. He says: –

"The sacramentarian doctrine of the papal and other prelatical churches, and the logical conclusion of Arminianism, left no other provision for infant salvation than baptism. To die without it was to be lost forever. This detestable doctrine the Confession of Faith was designed to destroy. It does destroy it. The Christian Church and the world are debtors to it for removing the gloom which surrounds the death of babes. The Assembly divines were all Calvinists, in entire accord with the second Scotch Confession, which on this subject

'abhors and detests among the doctrines of the Roman Antichrist his cruel judgment against infants dying without the sacrament.' The Calvinists of the Westminster Assembly who indorsed or approved that Confession, would surely not frame an article on infant salvation which would imply that any [R2718 : page 324] dying in infancy were without the pale of God's grace and redemption. So they made provision for all by referring all to the sovereign will of him 'who worketh when and where and how he will.' Only Calvinistic theology and a Calvinistic Confession can say that. The phrase contains the essence of Calvinism. What is that? Why, the grace of God is sovereign both in its source and application.

"As to the device of the doctrine of infant damnation, not one of the other denominations can point at the Presbyterian Church and say: 'Thou didst it.'

"The Roman Catholic Church in the Council of Trent decreed, and the decree still stands: –

"If any denies that new-born children must be baptized, or says that they do not derive from Adam anything of original sin which makes the washing of regeneration necessary to cleanse them for an entrance into everlasting life, let him be accursed.'

"The Lutheran Church did not rid itself altogether of Roman sacramentalism. Its Augsburg Confession teaches that 'Baptism is necessary to salvation.' It condemns all 'who affirm that children are saved without baptism.'

"Archbishop Cranmer, the first primate of the English Church, said in his 'Catechism': 'If we should have heathen parents and die without baptism, we would be damned everlastingly.'

"...The founder of the Methodist Episcopal Church, John Wesley, in his 'Treatise on Baptism,' 1756, says: –

"If infants are guilty of original sin, then they are the proper subjects of baptism, seeing in the ordinary way they can not be saved unless this be washed away by baptism. It has already been proved that this original stain cleaves to every child of man, and that they thereby are children of wrath and liable to eternal damnation."

*The Independent* (August 30) says: –

"It is a mere evasion to assert that 'elect infants' can mean all infants. It would be as easy to say 'all infants', as 'elect infants' if that were intended, and if it were not contradicted by the doctrine clearly expressed in the Confession, that original sin is worthy of eternal death. That the plain meaning of the Confession and its implications throughout includes infants among those who are lost, is sufficiently proved from the language of Dr. Twiss, prolocutor of the Westminster Assembly, who says distinctly in his '*Vindicae*' I., 48: –

"Many infants depart from this life in original sin, and consequently are condemned to eternal death on account of original sin alone. Therefore, from the sole transgression of Adam condemnation to eternal death has followed upon many infants.'

"What Dr. Twiss said was the belief of the rest and the teaching of the Confession."

The Rev. Henry Frank quotes John Calvin himself, saying: –

"John Calvin says with his accustomed clearness: 'The children of the reprobate [*i.e.*, the non-elect] whom the curse of God follows, are subject to the same sentence'. (Opera II.) Again: 'You deny that it is lawful for God, except for misdeeds, to condemn any human being....Put forth your evidence against God, who precipitates into *eternal death harmless, new-born children* torn from their mother's bosom.' (*'De Occulta Dei Providentia'*). 'As the eggs of the asp are deservedly crushed, and serpents just born are deservedly

killed, tho they have not yet poisoned any one with their bite, so infants are justly obnoxious to penalties' (Molineaux of France)....

"Once again hear John Calvin: 'Very infants themselves bring in their own damnation with them from their mother's womb; who, altho they have not yet brought forth the fruits of their iniquity, yet have the seed thereof enclosed within them; yea, their whole nature is a certain seed of sin; and therefore it can not be otherwise than hateful and abominable to God.'

"Now let us learn what the framers of the Confession themselves said concerning this damnable doctrine. William Twiss: 'If many thousands, even all the infants of Turks and Saracens, dying in original sin are tormented by him in hell-fire, is he to be accounted the father of cruelties for this?' For a vivid picture of the disposition of these eternally damned infants by this mild and maudlin Presbyterian God, read Samuel Rutherford, one of the Scotch commissioners who assisted in framing the creed. 'Suppose we saw with our eyes a great furnace of fire,...and all the damned as *lumps of red fire*, and they boiling and louping for pain in a dungeon of everlasting brimstone, and the black and terrible devils, with long and sharp-toothed whips of scorpions lashing out scourges on them; and if we saw our own neighbors, brethren, sisters; yea, *our dear children*, wives, fathers, mothers, swimming and sinking in that black lake, and heard the yelling, shouting, crying of our young ones and fathers....'"

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It will now be quite in order for some very conscientious Presbyterian brother to tell us that John Calvin knew nothing about *Calvinism* anyway; or to assure us that tho there were damned non-elect infants in times past, there are none today, tho God and his Word have not changed in the interim.

If, instead of saying elect and non-elect infants, Brother Calvin had said the children of the non-elect are damned when they are born,

he would have come much nearer stating the matter truthfully, however erroneous his conception of the facts. For the word *damned* in plain English simply signifies *condemned*, and the same is true of the Greek word translated in these two ways in the Bible....

No one can dispute that the Scriptures plainly teach that *condemnation (damnation)* passed upon all men because of father Adam's transgression (Rom. 5:12), and hence the declaration that mankind are "born in sin." (Psa. 51:5.) The only exceptions to this rule of being born *condemned (damned)* being in the case of children one or both of whose parents are believers. – 1 Cor. 7:14.

But then, the great difficulty of "Orthodoxy" lies in the fact that it has accepted theories respecting this **[R2719 : page 325]** original *condemnation (damnation)* or curse of God) framed in "the dark ages," that it means *condemned (damned)* to everlasting torture, either in fire and brimstone or something worse: a thought as opposed to the Scriptural teachings as to sound reason and common sense. If, however, the Scriptural thought be attached to the *condemnation (damnation)* and it be seen that all of Adam's race are born aliens and strangers from God, his enemies and under *condemnation (damnation)* to death as imperfect beings unworthy of God's favors, including everlasting life, – then all is plain, all is reasonable.

It will then be seen that as Adam's sin and its penalty were entailed upon his children, so the harmony with God of a believing parent would properly and consistently attach to his children until they shall have reached years of discretion and ability to accept or reject divine favor for themselves.

However, the children of unbelievers have the opportunity of accepting God's grace when they come to years of discretion, provided they have the necessary "ears to hear" – ears of the heart. And even such as, under Satan's influence, are deaf to the voice of God now speaking to us through his Son – and who therefore continue through

the present life under *condemnation (damnation)*, we have the assurance will in the Millennial age have the *ears of their understanding* opened and then have opportunity to obey and be blessed with the gift of God – eternal life.

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