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## THE GREATER CONFESSION\*

Mark xiv. 61-3; Matthew xxvi. 63-8; cf. Luke xxii. 66-71.

IT has become customary to speak of the confession which Simon Peter made at Cæsarea-Philippi as the great confession. Certainly the rock disciple made a magnificent affirmation of the faith of the disciple band. His answer still rings through the centuries, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." In a broader sense we may speak of the New Testament as the great confession of primitive Christianity to her Lord and Head. It is recognized to-day, not only by conservative<sup>1</sup> and by mediating,<sup>2</sup> but as well by "liberal" scholarship<sup>3</sup> that every one of the books of the New Testament is written from the standpoint of faith in Jesus Christ. "Throughout the New Testament Jesus is an object, the distinctive object of religious faith."<sup>3</sup> "The Gospels are in their deeper purpose confessions of the faith, not of individual disciples, but of the whole primitive Christian community."<sup>4</sup> They evidence the fact that "the whole Christian community and that from the very beginning, was firmly convinced that Jesus Christ was God manifest in the flesh."<sup>1</sup> Ernst Luthardt has pointed out that

"The collective life of the whole church is a confession to Christ. All its deeds, its whole worship, its preaching, its prayers, its sacred songs, its holy rites, are but a testimony to Him, while all art, whether of language or pictorial presentation, which has from the first been made use of by her, does but serve to glorify Him."

Every document we possess coming from the first hundred years of the Christian movement is redolent with this Christian faith and eloquent with this Christian confession.

This uniform documentary testimony must ultimately have its weight. The leading authorities in historical methodology such as Bernheim, Langlois, Seignovos, Harsin, Haskins, all proclaim as their primary dictum: NO DOCUMENTS NO HISTORY. In other words it is either the Christ presented in the documents of the first century of the Christian movement or no historical Christ. The Christ of the documents is further attested by the fact that His portraiture is beyond the power of men to fabricate.

\* Address delivered at the sixth Annual Commencement of Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia, U.S.A., Tuesday, May 7th, 1935.

<sup>1</sup> Warfield, B. B., *The Lord of Glory; Christology and Criticism*.

<sup>2</sup> Rawlinson, N. T. *Doctrine of the Christ*, p. 6; Brunner, *The Theology of Crisis*, p. 41.

<sup>3</sup> Bundy, W. E., *Our Recovery of Jesus*.

<sup>4</sup> Adam, K., *The Son of Man*, p. 87.

Even Rousseau said "the man who invented it would be greater and more astonishing than its hero." That is, the portrait of Christ presented in the great New Testament confession towers above human conception and invention. "No hand on earth could have painted the snow-white garment of light in which the Gospels present Him to us."<sup>1</sup> Every effort of men to ascribe words or acts to Jesus other than those recorded of Him turns to ashes beside the inimitable reality of the Christ of the Gospels. A recent study of these records shows that they have not been retouched to remove the elements alien and distasteful to the natural man. Rather the picture "carries with it the *offence* as the eternal hallmark of its genesis from above."<sup>1</sup> Sweitzer did not go far enough when he described the original Jesus as a strange figure we could not domicile in our modern frames. He has ever been the Figure before whom men have knelt and worshipped and in awestruck wonder have feared to transfigure. His first disciples left the very things which were stumbling-blocks to them, mute testimonies to the reality of the Christ of Scripture.

Now this great Christian confession implies a greater confession. Primitive Christianity is the story of a movement of faith, a church of faith, and a book of faith. But unless this movement had a sufficient impetus, it remains hanging in mid-air and stultifies our conception of history as an integrated web or tissue. Effects must have adequate causes. Pressing the argument a little more closely, Dr. Seeberg has pointed out that whatever is plainly common to all of the New Testament writers must have as its origin one of the sources which is common to all of these writers. The only common sources are the Old Testament, Judaism, and Jesus. The common confession of religious faith in Jesus of Nazareth could have come neither from the Old Testament nor from Judaism. It is impossible to account for the rockfast conviction of the primitive community apart from an affirmation by Jesus Himself. The phenomena of the great Christian confession require a greater confession by Jesus Himself confirmed by the total impress of His character, personality, godliness, words and works. The findings of the primitive community rest on Jesus' own avowal, while the impress of Jesus on subsequent history has been a continually increasing validation of these findings.

<sup>1</sup> Borchert, Otto, *The Original Jesus*, pp. 13, 19, 20.

Peter's was a great confession. In wider compass the New Testament is the great confession of the early Church. The great confession implies a greater confession. The four Gospels are permeated with this greater confession. Jesus' self-affirmations sparkle like diamonds in the pure gold of the World. Our text is one of the gems which articulate this greater confession.

An analysis of Mark xiv. 61-2 ; Matt. xxvi. 63-4 shows that under solemn oath imposed by the High Priest Jesus affirmed : (1) that He was the Christ ; (2) that He was the Son of the Blessed ; (3) that He was the One who would sit at the right hand of Power ; (4) that He was the Son of man who would return on the clouds of heaven. Each of these four affirmations is distinctly Messianic. Their cumulative Messianic effect is "stunningly significant". Such scholars as E. Nestle, G. F. Moore, J. J. S. Perowne, Rawlinson,<sup>1</sup> recognize that in His answer to the High Priest Jesus combines two of the loftiest Old Testament Messianic predictions, namely, Psalm cx. 1 in which Messiah as Adhonay sits at Jehovah's right hand, and Daniel vii. 13-14 in which Messiah as the Son of Man comes with the clouds of heaven to the Ancient of Days in order to receive dominion, glory and a kingdom. Jesus thus unites two passages which associate the Messiah in kingly dignity, power and dominion with Jehovah and applies them to Himself. One should also remember that the Son of Man was our Lord's favourite self-designation ; and that according to the triple tradition, Mark xii. 35-7, Matt. xxii. 42-6, Luke xx. 21-44, supported by the oral Gospel, Acts ii. 35-7 and the Epistles, 1 Cor. xv. 25, Heb. i. 13, Jesus had previously identified the Messiah with the Lord of the one hundred and tenth Psalm.

The content of this great self-affirmation of our Lord, the solemnity of the occasion on which it was uttered and the tragic consequences which followed justify one in describing this particular avowal as being *par excellence* Jesus' Greater Confession. And according to the exposition offered our Lord in the Greater Confession articulately declared : *First*, His consciousness of His own Messiahship ; and, *Secondly*, the Divine glory underlying that Messiahship. Moreover, the circumstances in which Jesus made this declaration indicate, *Thirdly*, the challenging courage of the Greater Confession. I offer, then, for your

<sup>1</sup> Nestle, E., *The Greek Testament*, p. 131 ; Moore, *Judaism*, II, 336 ; Perowne, *The Psalms*, II, 292 ; Rawlinson, *Mark*, p. 222.

consideration and appropriation the three thoughts I have enumerated.

## I

*First, Jesus affirmed His own Messiahship.*

It is an interesting incidental confirmation of this fact that the Saviour is primarily known to secular history as the Christ. The three Roman historians that refer to Him within a hundred years of His ministry each speak of our Lord as the Christ; not one of them gives us His human name Jesus. According to Suetonius, Tacitus and Pliny the Younger, the Saviour was known to Roman history as the Christ, the Messiah, even prior to the time that He was known by His name Jesus. The Jewish historian Josephus has to be used with care. But in view of the fact that a Jewish scholar like Rabbi Klausner finds a genuine testimony of Josephus to Jesus contained in the references in the Greek version; and that a Christian scholar, Dr. B. S. Easton, finds genuine testimony in the Slavonic Josephus buried under the rabbinical interpolations; and that these critically sifted testimonies agree that Jesus was crucified for professing to be the Messiah we may add Josephus's testimony that Jesus affirmed His Messiahship to similar implications in the Roman writers.

When we come to the Christian records the evidence is overwhelming. These records show that the title on the Cross was THE KING OF THE JEWS. This was the accusation against Jesus and the verdict of the courts which condemned Him (Mark xiv. 63; xv. 26). These courts found Jesus guilty of having affirmed a Messianic kingship. The particular form in which this Messianic kingship was written was itself so repulsive to early Christianity that it never could have been fabricated by the Christians. The Christians would never have forged as a title for Jesus, The King of the Jews. All too early that which savoured of Judaism became offensive to them. This offence has led even Bousset to withdraw his objection to the Gospel testimony that the superscription over the Cross was The King of the Jews.

Closely connected with the verdict is the charge of Jesus' enemies, "Jesus said that He was Christ a king", Luke xxiii. 2; and "whosoever making himself a king speaketh against Cæsar",

John xix. 12-15. Nor do Jesus' friends deny that the accusation of His enemies is correct. Indeed, they agree and explicitly testify that Jesus is the Christ. Speaking for the twelve, Peter confesses, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God." Further, these disciples of Jesus declare that Jesus Himself answered the question of Pilate, "Art thou the King of the Jews?" in the affirmative, Matt. xxvii. 11; Mark xv. 2; Luke xxiii. 3; John xviii. 33-8; just as He had previously answered the question of the High Priest, "Art thou the Christ?" in the affirmative. The Christian records show that Jesus affirmed His own Messiahship, that His friends affirmed His Messiahship, that His enemies charged and accused Him of professing Messiahship, and that both the Jewish and the Roman courts condemned Him in their respective verdicts expressly adjudging Him guilty of teaching His own Messiahship. Enemies, friends, the court, His own words, declare Jesus guilty of affirming His Messiahship. There is here a cohesive and a conclusive unanimity of assent. Not a single dissenting voice is raised against this conclusion. In other cases where there have been gross miscarriages of justice at least some voice, friend, foe, disinterested lover of truth has risen to repudiate the error that has been committed. That no voice is raised to repel the charge of having affirmed Messiahship is strong testimony, indeed, that Jesus did affirm His own Messiahship.

Further, this New Testament testimony stands the test of any higher criticism that can be objectively applied. The record that Jesus affirmed His Messiahship to the Jewish authorities is given in each of the Synoptists; while His answer to Pilate is preserved in the identical words in Matthew, Mark and Luke. Jesus' affirmation of His Messiahship thus rests on the triple tradition, supported in this instance also by John. If recourse be taken to *formgeschichte*, the words of the Greater Confession occur in the passion-and-resurrection *Predigt* which is accredited by the "oral gospel" as the fundamental element in the most primitive form, that is, in evangelistic preaching.

Moreover, this affirmation of His Messiahship has all the marks of intrinsic probability and historical verisimilitude. It fits the situation. From the standpoint of Judaism Messiahship with certain religious implications was blasphemy; while from the Roman point of view Messiahship with certain political implications was treason. To profess Messiahship, then, was to

throw oneself open to accusation and condemnation by both Jewry and Rome. Securing a confession of Messiahship from Jesus was, then, a *coup de maître* worthy of the traditional Jewish acumen. When Jesus confessed His Messiahship He brought about His own condemnation by the Jews on a religious charge and by the Romans on a political charge. This confession is integral to the whole *dénouement*. It fits the situation. Without it the most tragic moment in history is inexplicable. Therefore, the whole structure of the story buttresses the truth of our contention that Jesus affirmed His own Messiahship.

But perhaps someone is prone to ask how could Jesus affirm His Messiahship when He knew the shadows of death were closing in upon Him? Does not Messiahship connote a commission, an office, a series of functions, a work to be accomplished? How can one affirm that He is Messiah when He is about to die? "It was of the essence of the definition of Messiahship that the holder of the office should achieve His purpose; a Messiah with His work undone was no Messiah at all."<sup>1</sup> In answer to this objection we point to that particular Messianic affirmation which Jesus makes. He is not affirming a temporal, earthly kingship. His kingdom is not of this world. Gathering up the great lines of a celestial and an eschatological Messiahship Jesus wrought them into the confession of His own glory. Jesus affirmed that He was that Messiah who could and would accomplish the Messiah's work in spite of and even by means of death. In His death, through His death, beyond the grave reigning at the right hand of Jehovah and returning in the clouds of glory the Son of Man is the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed God. In other words the celestial Messiahship is the only one which fits the occasion. The whole of the Greater Confession is part and parcel, warp and woof of the structure of the event. No part can be dismissed as "liturgical elaboration". This is life, not liturgy!

## II

### *Second, The Divine Glory underlying the Messiahship which Jesus Professed.*

The statement of the intrinsic reality of that particular kind of confession which Jesus made also indicates the glory of

<sup>1</sup> Easton, B. S., *The Christ of the Gospels*.

His Messiahship. We have seen that the Saviour here weaves together four strands of Messianic expectation. He is the Christ, the Son of the Blessed, the Lord at the right hand of Power, and the Son of Man coming with the clouds of heaven. The High Priest addressed to Jesus a challenge to affirm His Messiahship in words that would allow the charge of blasphemy and so bring about His death. Jesus saw through their trap. But with a majestic "I AM" in a context reminiscent of the great "I AM THAT I AM" He announces a Messiahship that will use even that trap of death for His own eternal redemptive purpose, that will reign at the right hand of Power and will ultimately cause every eye to behold the dreadful majesty of that Son of Man whom they now call a blasphemer.

In studying the various lines here interwoven we cannot isolate each one and then think to get the total effect by adding the separated items into a sum. A tremendous amount emerges in the combination which was not in the elements. The occasion and each of the other several lines of thought furnish the context for each line that we study. Everyone is properly seen in the light of the whole. At best we can, then, seek to take up each of the four terms in the light thrown on the particular term by the presence of the other three. In that way something like the total effect may be secured.

Jesus confesses that He is that Christ whose character is further definable as the Son of the Blessed, the exalted Lord and the returning Son of Man. This is a distinctly religious conception of the Messiahship. It reminds us that Jesus had earlier placed Himself in the centre of men's spiritual interests inviting them to come unto Him to find rest for their souls, Matt. xi. 28-30. Jesus said of Himself what the rabbis said of the Shekinah, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst", Matt. xviii. 20. Jesus insisted on a place in men's affections above that they give to the most precious of human ties, Matt. x. 37. The same Jesus who taught that men should serve only the Lord God, Luke iv. 8, cf. i. 74, declared Himself to be the Lord to whom the servants should minister, Luke xii. 46. Jesus puts Himself in the place of Jehovah, Hos. ii. 19, as the Bridegroom of the people of God, Mark ii. 19, for whose return every pious heart yearns, Luke xii. 35f., Matt. xxv. 1f. The description of the Messiahship of the text as a Lordship reaching beyond death is a direct bid for that religious trust,



prayer and worship which the infant Church addressed to Him. A Messiahship that culminates in the coming of the Son of Man on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory, Matt. xxiv. 30, and with the angelic hosts as His very own, Matt. xiii. 41 ; xvi. 27, is certainly one with whom men must deal in the ultimates of human destiny. That is, the Messiahship which Jesus confessed is one that lies in the sphere of men's spiritual relationship to God, in those high regions where God touches the soul and the soul touches God. This Messiahship, as Dr. Vos has pointed out, placed Jesus "in the centre of the field where the forces of religion play". And "the directness and immediacy pertaining to every true exercise of religion in the ethereal Christian sense render it imperative that He shall Himself belong to the category of the divine. Otherwise our communion with God would be intercepted and diverted by Him to the impairment or nullification of it as a religious act."<sup>1</sup> The Messiahship which lifts itself in the Greater Confession is the answer to those deep streams of Old Testament prophecy which promised Jehovah Himself as the Saviour of His people, Isaiah xliii. 11, 13 ; Jer. xiv. 8 ; Hos. xiii. 4 ; Ps. cxxx. 8. Through the Messianic majesty of Jesus we catch glimpses of that ever more transcendent glory which we have learned to recognize and worship as His Deity. His Confession reiterates Jehovah's: "Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth : for I am God, and there is none else."

The High Priest evidently added the phrase, "the Son of the Blessed" in order to make an affirmative answer the basis of a charge of blasphemy. The Jews regarded the Messiah as the Son of God, Ps. ii. 7, Enoch cv. 2, 2 Edr. vii. 28, xiv. 9, in a far higher sense than that which inhered in the other kings of David's line, Ps. lxxxix. 26-7, 2 Sam. vii. 14. Already they had charged Jesus with blasphemy in saying God was His Father, thus making Himself equal to God, John v. 18 ; x. 33. And they had on another occasion asserted blasphemy when He undertook to forgive sins, Mark ii. 7, Matt. ix. 3. Of course, there are differing senses in which the vocables, the Son of God, can be and have been used. It is altogether evident, however, that when Jesus defined the Son of the Blessed as the Messiah, Adhonay at the right hand of Jehovah, and the Son of Man coming in a Divine theophany He was asserting Deity. The High Priest who was

<sup>1</sup> Vos, *The Self-Disclosure of Jesus*, p. 27.

learned in all the wisdom of the rabbis and who took in the whole immediate context so understood Jesus and understood Him aright. Either Jesus is God, or He is a blasphemer. On the ground of His Greater Confession the High Priest pronounced Him a blasphemer; on the ground of the same confession we worship Him as our Lord and our God. In the high sense defined by the context sonship means identity of nature with the Father, sameness of genus and of species, consubstantiality. In an earlier saying found both in Matthew xi. 27 and in Luke x. 21, 22 Jesus had asserted that both the Father and the Son differed from all mankind in the mystery of their beings; but that they were so alike in the similarity of their beings that they enjoyed complete mutual understanding. "They are no mystery to each other; rather they know each other fully. Here we have a supernatural, divine consciousness, and only if that is present is Jesus a mysterious being who can be known only to God."<sup>1</sup> My Father is among the first words on the fresh lips of the twelve-year-old child as it is last on the parched lips of the Crucified. All the prophets are but as servants, He is the Son and Heir of the vineyard which is the theocracy, Matt. xvii. 25; Mark xii. 1f. Buddha was beset with doubts, Mohammed meditated suicide; John the Baptist sent to Jesus for renewed assurance. But Jesus brought with Him such a consciousness of His celestial origin that He abode in the constant assurance of His Divine Sonship. Even in this hour of His most tragic need He affirmed it under oath.

Jesus not only affirmed the lofty Messiahship presented in the High Priest's question, He heightened that Messianic glory by combining with it two additional figures which *par excellence* represented the heavenly Messiah. In His statement that He shall be seen sitting at the right-hand of Power, our Lord identifies Himself with the Lord (Adhonay) who sits at the right hand of Jehovah, until his enemies are made the footstool of His feet, Ps. cx. 1. Only three days earlier Jesus had discussed this same Scripture with the Pharisees, Matt. xxi. 41-6, Mark xiii. 35-7, Luke xx. 41-4, pointed out to them that even King David had recognized the Messiah as his Lord. At the beginning of the same week Jesus had sent His disciples to ask an ass and a colt because He "the Lord hath need of them", Matt. xxi. 3; Mark xi. 3, Luke xix. 31. Also during passion week in His discourse concerning

<sup>1</sup> Borchert, p. 349.

the end of the world Jesus repeatedly represented Himself as standing in the position of Lord. In one parable Jesus presented Himself as the Lord of the house, Matt. xxix. 42-51, as indeed He had done several times in His earlier ministry, Matt. xiii. 24f., xx. 1f., using in these earlier parables the suggestive term 'House-despot'. In another passion week parable Jesus portrays Himself as the Lord who distributes talents to His bond slaves, Matt. xxv. 14-30. In the great judgment scene which immediately follows this parable Jesus comes as the Son of Man in His glory with all the angels, sits as King, and is addressed as the Lord, the final arbiter of human destiny. Dr. Borchert finds in another discourse of the same week, Matt. xxiii. 8-10, a hint given by Jesus which led the early Christian community to divide the two ancient titles of God 'Father' and 'Lord' between God and Jesus.<sup>1</sup> Be that as it may, the words of passion week justify those who accept the authority of Jesus in addressing Him as Lord. The Christian worship of Jesus as the exalted Lord reaching such heights as 'the Lord of Glory', 'Lord of all', and 'Lord of Lords and King of Kings', is but the acceptance by His followers of Jesus' Greater Confession. When there is definite and repeated historical testimony that Jesus ascribed lordship to Himself and identified Himself as the Lord of Psalm cx., it is contra-historical to declare that this usage arose in a pre-Pauline Gentile Christianity concerning which there are no historical documents. It is not history to deny a cause historically documented in the interest of a cause devoid of historical evidence. In His Greater Confession Jesus crashed through all human ideologies and inscribed His own glory in terms of the Throne of God. Following in His train Peter finds the source of the Spirit's blessing in the Lord at the right hand of God, Acts ii. 32-6; v. 31, and Paul keeps turning the eyes of his converts to the heavenlies where the risen Christ is at the right hand of God, Ephesians.

In the Greater Confession Jesus is not only the Lord in the heavens, but also the Son of Man who is to come with the clouds of heaven. The repeated references to the Son of Man coming on the clouds of a Divine theophany, Matt. xxvi. 64; xxiv. 30, cf. xxiv. 27, with power and great glory, Matt. xvi. 27; xxiv. 30, with His angels, Matt. xxv. 31; xvi. 27; xiii. 41; coming in His Kingdom, Matt. xvi. 28, or coming for the final judgment, Matt. xxv. 31, is now having its weight. Critics of all schools

<sup>1</sup> *The Original Jesus*, p. 352.

have come to recognize that the Son of Man is the figure seen in Daniel vii. 13 and in the Parables of Enoch. In these passages as in the Gospels He is always a super-mundane figure. He pre-exists under the pinions of the Lord of spirits and descends out of heaven, as is expressly taught in John iii. 13 ; vi. 62. Dr. Case recognizes this when, from his naturalistic point of view, he asserts that Jesus could not have identified Himself with the Son of Man because the Son of Man is too lofty a figure to be identified with a mere man.<sup>1</sup> Vos says nothing else in the Gospels has so stamped the supernatural and the superhuman upon the self-portrayal of Jesus as these parousia Son-of-man passages. Dr. Borchert carries the implication still higher when in such passages as Matt. xvi. 27 ; xiii. 41, he finds the Son of Man wielding that authority which is the pre-eminent mark of Jehovah of hosts.<sup>2</sup> The Son of Man is to come in the glory of His Father and with all the holy angels *as His own angels*. This looks like the possession of the glory of Jehovah and the ownership of Jehovah's hosts. In the text Jesus is certainly identifying Himself with the Son of Man. This identification is clear in Jesus' earlier ministry by the repeated references to the Son of Man in contexts that betoken His life of humiliation, suffering, lowly service, death, and resurrection. Mark viii. 31 ; ix. 9, 12, 31 ; x. 33, 45 ; xxi. 41 ; Matt. xxvi. 45 ; John xii. 34. It is as definitely indicated here in the Greater Confession by the transcendental usage, since, as we have seen, a celestial Messiahship is the only one which fits the situation. The sign of the Son of Man is set as the climax and culmination of human history. Maranatha, the Lord Cometh. As our hearts answer "even so come, Lord Jesus" let us pause to remember the awful solemnity of that coming. From His throne "these shall go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

### III

#### *Third, The Challenging Courage of the Greater Confession.*

The circumstances under which Jesus made His great affirmation constitute the Greater Confession the most courageous challenge in all history. Jesus is the proto-martyr of our

<sup>1</sup> Case, *Jesus—A New Biography*.

<sup>2</sup> *The Original Jesus*, p. 26.

profession. It was this example of His heroism as well as the presence of His Spirit that nerved the Christian martyrs for the heroic age of the Church. Amid the faggots and flames Jesus was the Leader nerving His own with the fine charm of the courageous.

When Marshal Ney entered the presence of Napoleon after directing that masterful retreat from Moscow the Emperor caught him in his arms exclaiming, "the bravest of the brave". But Napoleon was wrong. If you would see the bravest of the brave, behold the God-man as He answers the High Priest's question with His Greater Confession. Or if one returns to the age of chivalry, Godfrey of Bouillon stands out as the eighteen-year-old youth to whom was committed the Imperial standard and later the kingdom of Jerusalem. But Godfrey acknowledged the inferiority of his own courage to that of his Saviour when he declined to wear a crown of gold in the city where Christ had worn a crown of thorns. Crowns of gold perish, crowns of roses fade, crowns of thorns endure. "Calvaries and crucifixions take deepest hold of humanity—the triumphs of might are transient—they pass and are forgotten—the sufferings of right are graven deepest on the chronicle of nations."

Military courage has ever paid tribute to the superiority of moral courage. At the door of the Palace of Worms old General Frundsberg, the most illustrious soldier in Germany, clapped Luther kindly on the shoulder with these words: "My poor monk! my little monk! thou art on thy way to make a stand as I and many of my knights have never done in our toughest battles. If thou art sure of the justice of thy cause, then forward in the name of God, and be of good courage: God will not forsake thee." But Luther's Saviour made a confession that meant His God would forsake Him and visit upon Him the wrath our sins deserved.

Peter once made a great confession. But now Peter is outside warming himself, afraid to enter, a profane denial on his cringing lips. Had Peter been present, no doubt he would have advised Jesus, "Lower your colours just a bit to-day, it is not expedient to make a full testimony now, await a better occasion." Peter had already furled his own colours. No doubt he would like to have lowered Jesus' a bit. But towering over the "great" confessor is the Greater Confessor. Jesus did not lower His colours. Looking the High Priest full in the eye He answered unequivocally in the affirmative. And then upon the

lofty heights of the Divine Messiah posited in the question He added two additional pictures carrying His Messianic claims straight to the throne of God and the judgment bar of eternal destiny. Jesus did not flinch. He planted His colours in the Throne of the Almighty.

And just because He did, His words with the Spirit which He sends down from Heaven have made the heroes of the ages: Stephen and a repentant Peter, Ignatius, Polycarp of Smyrna, Justin Martyr, John Huss, Patrick Hamilton, John the Steadfast of Saxony and Frederick the Pious of the Palatinate, Andrew Melville, William Tindale, Ridley and Latimer, and in the end Cranmer, Jean Leclerc, Berquin, Calvin, Antoine Court, John G. Paton, John Williams, down to our own Vinson and the Stamms.

It is the challenging courage of that Figure who faces Caiaphas that gives us the courage to-day to set up our banners in Him alone, and to declare anew our full and sole allegiance to "His Word, the statute book of His Kingdom, the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament". "Slavery to Christ alone is the true and only freedom of the human soul."

In the hour of crisis the courage of Peter, the maker of the great confession, collapsed. But the Greater Confessor so renewed and restored His disciple that a new Peter empowered by the Lord proclaimed a faith and a principle that will outlast time.

"Whether it is right in the sight of God to hearken unto you rather than unto God judge ye. . . . *We must obey God rather than men.*" Acts iv. 19; v. 29.

Just a year ago, young men of Westminster, you were challenged with these same words. Will you be servants of God or servants of men? Twelve months have only made the gravity of that issue more apparent. The men of our day heed the words of the Lord as little as those of His day heeded the Word of God through Isaiah:

In vain do they worship me,  
Teaching for doctrines the commandments of men (Matt. xv. 9).

I have no new challenge to offer you. It is my privilege to point your eyes to the High Priest of our Profession as He makes the confession which sends Him to Calvary. May His Greater Confession and the grace of the Holy Spirit endow you with that courage which dwells in un failing measure in Him so that you also may witness a good confession.

My friends, the Christian faith will live. And to that end God will use those who believe and teach it. A bit of the ripest philosophy of Dr. B. B. Warfield may be in order here. A few weeks before his death Dr. Warfield told his class that the masses of the people had the Bible in their hands and that the Christian faith would live. He declared that he was not sure that the organized churches would continue true to the Word of God ; but that if they failed, new churches would come up from the people, who now had the Bible in their hands. This true Calvinist did not place his ultimate confidence in the empirical churches. His oriflamme was the Word of God which liveth and abideth for ever. If the Father reveal unto you the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ so that a real echo of His Greater Confession break from your lips as it did from Peter's you will each be members of that Church against which the gates of hell shall not prevail. Receive the revelation of Jesus Christ, rest on His saving work, live by His sufficient Word and " ye are come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem and to innumerable hosts of angels, and to the general assembly and the Church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect and to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better things than that of Abel."

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