

# The Presbyterian Church in America

A MANUAL FOR NEW MEMBERS

APPENDIX

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## APPENDIX

### THE CREED OF PRESBYTERIANS

Every statement of essential Calvinistic doctrine in our Standards, the Bible substantiates by equally bold and bald statements of its own. Yet the former is the chosen object of attack. The reason is plain. In a Christian land, where the Scriptures are widely revered, it is cheaper and safer to assault the Presbyterian Standards than to assault the Bible. Hence it is that the Presbyterian church has always sustained the brunt of the fight for the integrity of God's truth. "We gratefully acknowledge," said the Wesleyan Methodist Conference in its address to the Presbyterian Alliance, "the faithful and unfaltering testimony which your church has borne throughout her entire history on behalf of the divine inspiration and authority of the Word of God." Said the Baptist Association in its greeting to the same body: "The Presbyterian church has been the magnificent defender of the Word of God throughout the ages." Above all others, she has borne, bears now, and will continue to bear, on her name the odium, and upon her person the blows, provoked by and aimed against the Word of God. Humbly yet proudly she can say to her Lord, "The reproaches of them that reproach Thee fell on me." —Dr. Egbert Watson Smith

### **THE CREED OF PRESBYTERIANS: THE WESTMINSTER ASSEMBLY 1643-1648**

The Westminster Assembly was a representative body, called by the English Parliament, made up of one hundred and twenty-one divines, eleven lords, twenty commoners, from all the counties of England and the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge, with seven commissioners from Scotland. Many of them jeopardized their livings by accepting Parliament's appointment and after the Restoration cheerfully sacrificed their earthly all for conscience' sake. It was an elect assembly. On every side were men conspicuous for learning, eloquence, and piety; professors not only of the sacred but also of the secular sciences; deans, masters, and heads of colleges, vice chancellors in the great universities. Their moderator was Dr. Twiss, scholar and theologian of continental fame, whose ruling passion may be inferred

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from his death-bed utterance, "Now, at length, I shall have leisure to follow my studies to all eternity." Nor were they scholars and theologians alone. Amongst them were thinkers of various types -- orators, statesmen, hymnists, saints-men in every way qualified to voice the deepest religious convictions and embody in symbols and institutions which produced "statesmen like Hampden, soldiers like Cromwell, poets like Milton, preachers like Howe, theologians like Owen, dreamers like Bunyan, hymnists like Watts, commentators like Henry, saints like Baxter." Philip Schaff, the great church historian, said: "Whether we look at the extent or ability of its labors, or its influence upon future generations, it stands first among Protestant councils." -Dr. Egbert Watson Smith

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## PCA VISION 2000

### PRESENTED TO THE 1987 GENERAL ASSEMBLY

As one communion in the worldwide church, the Presbyterian Church in America exists to glorify God by extending the kingdom of Jesus Christ over all individual lives through all areas of society and in all nations and cultures. To accomplish this end the PCA aims to fill the world with churches that are continually growing in vital worship, in theological depth, in true fellowship, in assertive evangelism and in deeds of compassion. The distinctiveness of the PCA lies in our stress on both reformation and revival. Without an emphasis on revival, "reformation" may become either a mimicking of political ideologies or sterile doctrinalism. Without an emphasis on reformation, "revival" may become a shallow pietism or mysticism. Only reformation and revival together can accomplish the Great Commission of our Lord. We are committed to the Scriptures and the historic Westminster Standards based firmly on a biblical theology that answers the questions and issues of each culture and people to which we minister. We are committed to worship regulated by the Word of God, in which the people of God know the presence and power of God that transforms lives, families and cultures. We are committed to the winning of new converts and their incorporation into the church through the ministry of the Word and to significant ministry to the needy through deeds of mercy and service. We are committed to the freedom of every member to minister through spiritual gifts and also to the responsibility to do so under spiritual and loving discipline. We are committed to dynamic, prophetic confrontation on non-Christian thought forms and behavior and also to the demonstration of the truth through the practice of holiness and love in Christian fellowship. We are committed to guarding and strengthening the biblical family and also to a ministry to the broken family forms such as the divorced, the widowed and the unwed parent. We are committed to teaching and discipling men and women in the whole counsel of God and also to ministering to the needs of the whole person. True to the Scriptures, the reformed faith, and obedient to the Great Commission of Jesus Christ