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ARTICLE I.—THE RECENT PRESENTATION OF THE “ANTIGONE” IN NEW HAVEN.

IN the high pressure of modern life, as we see life in this country, so full of material progress, it is difficult to force one's self to an understanding of a state of society so far removed from our own as was that of the ancient Greeks. A strong effort is necessary to conceive of a people whose whole nature was penetrated with a love of the highest order of literature, a nation whose drama was their solemn ritual, whose theatre, as some writer has said, was but their pulpit widened into a stage, whose “tragic spirit was the offspring of their conscience.”

A tendency to put ourselves in touch with this noblest of all races has of late years been evident in the frequently recurring presentations of Greek dramas in America. The earnest desire shown in these presentations to renew the beauty, simplicity, and poetry of antique life, so making the lofty ideals of a remote age the common property of to-day, is interesting proof in itself of the growth and wider range of intellectual activity

ARTICLE II.—OUR LITTLE EIRENICON.

LET it not be thought that because the battle is over between Dr. Briggs and his antagonists in the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, our sprig of an olive-branch is too late for use. On the contrary, it is just in time. The battle is over, and it is a Bull Run victory and defeat; but the war has just begun. And an olive-branch that would have fallen to earth and been trampled by the contending hosts, if it had been brought into the thick of the fight, may not be unwelcome to the tired soldiers on either side, as they rest their "weariéd valor" and look forward to renewed conflicts on other fields.

Nothing will help more to take the acrimony out of the controversy which now vexes the Presbyterian Church, than to scrutinize exactly the main question at issue, and define it with precision. Perhaps it may be found to be a question of less awful moment than in the heat of the struggle it appeared to be. The main question, lying back of the merely personal question whether Dr. Briggs should be "Robinson professor," is the question on the inerrancy of Sacred Scripture; and as to this, the relative position of the two parties is by no means what it is generally believed to be. Carefully defined, it is this:

The Princeton theologians of the present day hold that there once existed certain documents, the exact contents of which are not now discoverable, which were absolutely free from error of any kind whatever.

Professor Briggs says that he is not sure of it.

This we believe to be the exact statement of the main question at issue. It has its importance, no doubt, from an archaeological point of view; but it is worth while to ask, now in this moment of calm after the storm, whether it is really the question "of a standing or falling church" which some have supposed it.

Both parties are agreed that there is no existing edition or translation of the Scriptures, nor any manuscript copy of them in the original languages, of which absolute infallibility is to be

asserted. The defense by the Princeton divines of their favorite thesis of the absolute inerrancy of Holy Scripture is rested, in the last resort, on the absolute impossibility of determining exactly and beyond question what Holy Scripture originally was and what it meant. For "the Church has asserted absolute infallibility only of the original autograph copies of the Scriptures as they came from the hands of their inspired writers." [Dr. A. A. Hodge, *Outlines of Theology*, Ed. 1878, p. 73.] Armed with this qualification, the ingenious young Timothies under training at Princeton for the Holy War, are encouraged to plant themselves boldly on the doctrine of the infallibility of the Scriptures, and bid defiance to the armies of the aliens. In answer to profane allegations of "discrepancy" in the sacred text, they are instructed to hurl into the teeth of the cavalier the question, "How do you know it was in the original autograph?" and demand the proof—which it is safe to say that no mortal can give; and if, after such a knock-down as this, the uncircumcised Philistine shall come staggering up to renew the fight, they must be ready and let him have the next right in the forehead:—"How do you know that that is what it means?" "The difficulty of this will be apprehended when we estimate the inherent obscurity of ancient narratives, unchronological and fragmentary, with a background and surroundings of almost unrelieved darkness. This condition of things * * * baffles all the ingenious efforts of the rationalist critic to demonstrate the 'discrepancy.'" [Ibid., p. 76.] With these two precious principles, the undeterminable uncertainty of the "original autograph" text, and the inscrutable obscurity of its meaning—these two smooth stones from the limpid depths of Dr. Hodge's purling "*Outlines of Theology*"—of what use the cumbrous armor of human learning which is fabricated at such cost at Union Seminary, or Yale, or Andover? We understand now why it is that Colonel Ingersoll always fights shy of Princeton students, and at first sight of these valiant striplings flies howling from the field.

It will be seen that we do not depreciate the importance of the doctrine of "inerrancy" as held at Princeton. Taken in connection with the two great and immutable principles of the impossibility of exactly knowing the original text, and the impossibility of exactly understanding it if you did know it, it

constitutes an imposing and elegant-looking rampart of the faith. The question whether its guns are not swivels that might be aimed as readily at a doctrine as at a discrepancy, so endangering the precious tenets of limited atonement and unconditional reprobation, we barely hint at, lest we might seem to disclose to the enemy the weak points in the towers and walls of Zion.

Now to us, whose only advantage in studying the situation is the proverbial advantage which the looker-on has over the player, it does not seem impossible that, by concessions involving no sacrifice of principle, a *modus vivendi* might be arrived at by which Dr. Briggs and his friends should abide peacefully in the same communion with Dr. Patton and Dr. Green.

On the one hand, let the Princeton professors frankly recognize that Dr. Briggs, in common with a multitude of his fellow-Christians, is not wholly blameworthy for knowing less of certain unknown, extinct and hopelessly irrecoverable ancient autograph manuscripts than his Princeton brethren. It is not charged against him that he has been remiss in efforts to know all that he can about them; nay, this is his offense, that he has been unduly assiduous, by critical studies, in exploring the streams of inspired Scripture to their fountain-heads. Princeton knows, not by evidence (for it is the boast of Princeton theology that the proposition cannot be proved by evidence) but by a certain transcendental *a priori* cognition or clairvoyance, that the manuscripts, which have been lost anywhere from 2000 to 3000 years, if they could be discovered (which, thank Heaven, they never can be, or they might play the very mischief with Dr. Hodge's "Outlines") would be found to contain no discrepancy but what might be accounted for on the ground of their "inherent obscurity." Now let it be borne in mind that this is a fact in its nature undiscoverable by the human intellect. It is hid from the wise and prudent, and known only to Princeton men. But Dr. Briggs did not graduate at Princeton, but at New York, and how was it possible for him to know? Far be it from us to suggest any such heresy as that obligation is commensurate with ability; but even so stanch a Princeton man as the apostle Paul has pleaded ignorance in mitigation of judgment. Dear brethren, in the interest of peace, give this consideration its full weight.

On the other hand, could not Dr. Briggs and his colleagues be induced to desist from pursuing further those studies in textual and higher criticism which tend to dispel the salutary obscurity that rests upon the original Scriptures. The "dangerous tendency" of the teachings in the exegetical department at Union Seminary has notoriously been, for years past, to throw light upon dark and doubtful things in the Scriptures. To fix with exactness the text of the confessedly fallible existing recension of the Scriptures, to trace with laborious "searching" the anterior documents, and come as near as possible to the original autographs, has been their aim. And in the most generous way they have been exculpated by their antagonists from any charge of evil intention. They really thought to do God service. But now that it is made clear to them, in this humble article, that the main reliance of the Princeton defenders of the faith is on the inscrutable uncertainty and obscurity of the Scriptures, and that studies which throw light on the dark places of Holy Writ, and settle the doubtful places, are sapping the walls of Zion, and pulling the corner stone out from under the foundation of the theology of a sister Seminary, will not the dear brethren at New York make the necessary *sagrifizio dell' intelletto*, and instead of this restless searching of the Scriptures, devote themselves modestly, humbly and quietly to instructing in the late Dr. Hodge's "Outlines of Theology?"

We may be inopportune in attempting thus to apply this "Weapon-salve for the Church's Wounds." But it cannot be useless to define the exact theological question at issue between the parties. Concerning any existing Bible, or any that has been known to exist for long ages before the Westminster Assembly, there is actually no point of principle in dispute. The debate is as to the quality of certain long-ago extinct manuscripts the exact contents and meaning of which are confessedly undiscoverable.

Does it not seem to the calm looker-on from outside as if this was a somewhat small and unpractical question on which to have stirred up such a furious commotion?

Blessed are the peacemakers.

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