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I. THE IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL.

THEY to whom the Bible is a sufficient rule of faith have this great question happily settled for themselves. For in the gospel, life and immortality are clearly brought to light. The doctrine is expressly asserted in a multitude of places, and is necessarily implied in the whole moral system which the Bible teaches. But unfortunately there are now many who hold the word of God as not authority. Christendom is infested with schools of evolution and materialism, which attempt to bring this great truth in doubt by their "philosophy, falsely so-called," and which mislead many unstable souls to their own undoing.

To such as will not look at the clear light of Scripture, we propose to offer the inferior light of the natural reason. The sun is immeasurably better than a torch, but a torch may yet save the man who has turned his back on the sun and plunged himself into darkness, from stumbling over a precipice into an unseen gulf. We claim that we are entitled to demand the attention of all such doubters to the rational argument; for as they have set up philosophy against the Bible, mere honesty requires them to listen to philosophy, the true philosophy, namely:

There is certainly probable force in the historical fact that most civilized men of all ages and countries have believed in the immortality of their souls, without the Bible. Even the American Indians have always believed in the Great Spirit, and expected a future existence in the happy hunting grounds. The

to Troy. The attitude of its author throughout is inimical to the claims of the sacred volume to be regarded as a truly divine revelation; and if his conclusions be accepted by those who are to occupy the pulpits of the churches of these lands, there will, ere long, be inaugurated, if divine grace do not interpose a barrier to its progress, a cycle of moderatism and skepticism such as has wrought the decadence of vital Christianity among so many of the churches of the continent.

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BRIGGS' THE BIBLE, THE CHURCH, AND THE REASON.

THE BIBLE, THE CHURCH, AND THE REASON; THE THREE GREAT FOUNTAINS OF DIVINE AUTHORITY. *By Charles Augustus Briggs, D. D., Edward Robinson Professor of Biblical Theology in the Union Theological Seminary, New York.* New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. 1892. Pp. 298. Price, \$1.75.

This is a new book, but neither the theme nor its treatment can be called new. The main part of the volume consists in a repetition and expansion of the positions taken by Professor Briggs in his *Inaugural Address*. Several other discussions together with a number of appendices are added. To some extent these show the hand of the bookmaker as much as the pen of the author.

The book contains seven lectures and sixteen appendices. Their titles are: I. The Bible and the Church. II. The Reason as a great Fountain of Divine Authority. III. The Three Fountains of Divine Authority. IV. Is Scripture Inerrant? V. The Higher Criticism. VI. Biblical History. VII. The Messianic Ideal. In the preface Professor Briggs says that "five of these lectures (I-V.) were prepared in response to requests that I should set forth more fully the views expressed in my *Inaugural Address* on the *Authority of Scripture*," and he adds that "it was not his intention to publish these lectures, but he could not decline to comply with the many requests for their publication from all parts of the land." Accordingly these lectures were delivered in New York and vicinity, and then issued in the treatise now before us, with lectures VI. and VII., added. If the request for the delivery and publication of these lectures came from the friends of the professor he has need to pray "deliver me from my friends." Moreover, his own apparent readiness to respond to their request indicates a desire to obtrude his views in a way which left those who did not agree with him no alternative but to resist.

It is to be remembered also, that these lectures were delivered last winter, after the Presbytery of New York had concluded, largely in the interests of the peace of the church, to stay the prosecution for heresy against him. He seemed to assume that the decision of the Presbytery was a tacit approval of his views, and that it gave him liberty to promulgate them. The book before us is evidence of this. In this also is to be found an explanation of the fact that the same Presbytery, when electing commissioners to the General Assembly, sent a delegation that was almost entirely opposed to the views of Professor Briggs. Many of those who in the interest of peace voted to stay proceedings at one meeting of Presbytery, voted at the other meeting to send men to the General Assembly opposed to the Professor. These men were doubtless disappointed that Dr Briggs seemed to misunderstand the decision of the Presbytery in the first instance, and that disappointment expressed itself most significantly in the second. But perhaps it is better as

it is, for truth is of more value than even peace, and the only lasting basis of peace in the church is purity of doctrine.

The tone of the book is, to say the least, unnecessarily severe. The almost contemptuous way in which the author speaks of the opinions of those who do not agree with him, makes it very necessary that his friends should apologize for "his unfortunate manner," while those whose opinions he treats with such scant courtesy, cannot but feel irritated if not aggrieved.

To show that we are not astray in this estimate of the spirit and tone of the book a few quotations may be made: "Protestants did not renounce Pope Leo X. in order to exalt pope Luther or Calvin, still less *those little popes* who appear in succession in the different countries and churches, and who try so hard to dominate theology by the use of such ecclesiastical machinery as may happen to be within their reach." (P. 10.) "If it be necessary that we should be controlled by traditional dogma in interpreting holy Scripture, any historical scholar would prefer ancient Catholic tradition to a tradition which goes no further back than the Swiss and Dutch Scholasticism of the seventeenth century, or to *its ill-formed and sickly child*, which was born in American schools of theology not a century ago." (P. 11.) Speaking of Cardinal Newman, he says: "I would rather follow Newman into the presence of my Master than *risk* the companionship of *those uncharitable men* who would exclude him from the kingdom of God. With the burning words of Jesus sounding in my ears, 'Woe unto you scribes and pharisees, hypocrites! because ye shut the kingdom of heaven against men,' I would fear lest the Master should say to such a company: 'I know you not, ye have none of my Spirit, ye are none of mine.'" (P. 19.) Concerning the salvation of the heathen, he assails certain dogmatic theologians by saying: "The prejudices derived from systems of dogma as antiquated as the map of Hereford (thirteenth century), and *the bigotry born of a pharisaic contempt* of the lower religions of mankind, are unworthy of our age." (P. 45.) Concerning "barriers," he says: "The *scholastic divines* of Protestantism erected a series of barriers about the Bible no less serious as *obstacles* to communion with God and *stumbling-blocks* to faith than the Roman Catholics had erected about the church." (P. 51.) Alluding to the Scriptures *being* or *containing* the word of God, he says: "These *polemic theologians* take their stand at the waters of life and demand of every one who would partake of them, 'Say the Bible is the word of God, or depart from the Bible and the church.'" (P. 100.) Another quotation, the most bitter of all, must suffice. "These three Americans (Professors W. H. Green, Howard Osgood, and E. C. Bissell) have not yet won a single scholarly victory or checked for an instant the advance of criticism in America. The contest ought to be a scholarly contest between critics who adhere to the traditional theory, and critics who have abandoned the traditional theory for the results of a more scientific study of the Scriptures. The chief difficulty in the situation is that *some ministers and editors who are not critics*, and who are ignorant of the history and terminology of criticism, endeavor to excite the public mind against higher criticism by *appeals to prejudice and brutal methods*. Our Saviour represents such *enemies of the truth as hissing serpents* (Matt. xxiii. 13). Paul writes of them *as dogs* (Phil. iii. 2). It is in accordance with such precedents that Eichhorn uses the term 'snort.' This term has been regarded by biblical scholars for a century as a graphic description of a kind of opposition they have had to contend with." P. 278-279. (Italics mine.)

The spirit manifested by these passages may be excused as the "unfortunate manner" of Professor Briggs, still we are inclined to think that it will entirely forfeit his claim to a place among the martyrs, should the church of which he is a minister deal with him severely.

Our space forbids careful review of the whole ground covered by this book, so that we confine attention to what is its main theme, as it was of the *Inaugural Address*. The first three lectures thus lie before us. Our author's discussion raises the important question of the source of authority in religion, and of the relative or coördinate claims of the Bible, the Church, and the Reason to constitute that source.

The first lecture deals with *the Bible and the Church*, and here our author's aim is to show that the church is "a great fountain of divine authority." Before he enters upon this main theme three preparatory topics are discussed. The first is, "The Authority to Define the Canon of Holy Scripture"; the second is, "The Authority of Interpreting Scripture;" and the third is, "The Westminster Doctrine of the Church."

What our author says in regard to the first of these topics is exceedingly meagre, confusing and unsatisfactory. Perhaps it is our own dullness, but we must confess our inability to learn what answer Professor Briggs really gives to the question of authority to determine the Canon of Scripture. Whether we are to make the Bible define its own Canon, or whether we must look to the religious consciousness, or whether again we should rely on the witness of the Holy Spirit in the Bible, or in our hearts, or both, is not made at all clear by our author. Here, too, as so often in the whole book, there is utter failure to distinguish between the objective ground upon which the authority of the Word of God rests, and the subjective experience of the saving power of that word in the soul.

Regarding the second question, Dr. Briggs says that the authority for the interpretation of Scripture is to be found in the Scripture itself. None will seriously object to this statement, for it is really the principle of the analogy of the faith as found in the harmony of Scripture teaching in all its parts. But all that Professor Briggs says here still leaves the real question practically unsolved. That question is, Who is to decide what the meaning of Scripture is? Is it to be the individual or the church, or have both rights in the premises? Now while the right of private judgment in the individual is to be held fast as against the Romish doctrine of the authority of the church alone to interpret Scripture, as well as settle its canon, still the interpretation which the individual makes must be in a measure modified or related to the interpretation made by the other individuals associated in the same ecclesiastical communion. In this way creeds and confessions arise. A creed is simply the interpretation of Scripture arranged in order which the church in her corporate capacity at any given time sets forth. Now while the Scripture is the only infallible rule, and while creeds have value only in so far as they agree with Scripture, yet the church's interpretation of Scripture as expressed in her creed binds for the time those who voluntarily assume relations with that church. Should anyone be convinced that the creed or its interpretation is not according to Scripture, several courses are open to him. He may withdraw from the church, or he may seek in an orderly and constitutional way to modify the creed in accordance with his views of Scripture. But he is not justified in concluding that he only is right and all the rest are in error, much less has he any

right to remain in the church and teach views which are inconsistent with the creed. Even in the case of a trial for heresy, the creed, as expressing the meaning the church takes of Scripture, forms the law which is to be administered. The accused cannot successfully appeal, in the process of trial, to the Scripture as he understands it, but his opinions are to be judged by the Scriptures as understood by the church. That understanding is found in the creed, and there is neither dishonor to the Scripture nor hardship to the individual in such a case.

Concerning the third question Professor Briggs maintains that the Westminster doctrine of the church is that it is a great fountain of divine authority. Christ, he says, in giving the church the keys of the kingdom, constituted it a fountain of divine authority. Unless this, he adds, be the case the church has no organization at all.

It is not going beyond the mark in the least to say that there is endless confusion in the views of our author on this point. It is quite true that the church, as a divinely ordained institute, receives its authority as divine from Jesus Christ. But the constitution of the church wherein Jesus Christ makes known the divine will and authority is the Holy Scriptures. It is true also that the Holy Spirit dwells in the church, and is present in her ordinances, but the very idea of the church itself and the form of the ordinances are determined by the Scriptures. Dr. Briggs seems hopelessly confused upon this whole topic.

Coming to the real question our author argues at length that the church is truly a great fountain of divine authority. He supports this conclusion by six arguments, as follows: (1.) "Christ and the apostles so teach." But it is not easy to see how the passages quoted prove anything more than that the church is a divine institute and the channel by which the blessings of the gospel flow to men, unless our author is willing to accept the exegesis and adopt the logic that lead to Rome. (2.) "Church history proves it." But so far as church history bears on the question it shows that popery is the natural product of authority in the church as against authority in Scripture. (3.) "The condition of the world" is another proof. But the question is not as to the condition of the world, but in regard to the mind and will of God upon this subject. (4.) "Biblical history also proves that the church is a great fountain of divine authority inasmuch as the church antedates the Bible." But does the church antedate the Bible? Certainly the church in the world does not antedate divine revelation, and that is all we need to maintain here. (5.) "Christian experience also proves it." But both the form and contents of a genuine Christian experience must be determined by the Scriptures, even though the Holy Spirit be the vitalizing agency in that experience. The church has no voice with which to speak to the Christian experience till God, speaking to and through her, gives her a voice and a message. (6.) "Prophetically the church is a great fountain of divine authority." What our author says upon this point bears far more upon the authority of Scripture than upon that of the church.

Summing up the results of our examination of this lecture we have to confess that repeated perusal of it has not removed the feeling in our mind that our author does much special pleading in the course of his discussion, and that he entirely fails to make out his case. To show that the church and her ordinances are of divine origin is not to prove that the church is a great fountain of divine authority. If the church be but the divine channel by means of which the blessings of grace

are brought to men, Professor Briggs has certainly been wasting his strength, for all admit this.

The second lecture undertakes to show that *the reason is a great fountain of divine authority*. At the very outset our author must be charged with failure to define what he means by *the reason*. It is not "the light of nature" of the first chapter of the Confession of Faith. He speaks of it as the "light of grace," as "the divine Logos shining in the heart," as "the working of the divine Spirit." Then, again, he seems to include along with reason, "the conscience and the religious feeling" as embraced under *the reason* which he thinks constitutes "a great fountain of divine authority." Such flexibility and ambiguity of language is inexcusable, especially when the term in question holds such an important place in the discussion. But a more serious objection still lies against our author at this point. He introduces certain doubtful metaphysical conceptions, partly Platonic and partly Kantian, when he speaks of the "inner light of the Logos," and of "the metaphysical categories" and of the forms of reason, and thereby is guilty of what in other connections he condemns in very strong language. Is Dr. Briggs himself free from scholasticism?

He first tries to find in the Confession support for his views in regard to the authority of the reason. He admits that the Westminster doctrine of the reason is defective at this point, and he gives a word of praise to the Quakers and the Cambridge Platonists for bringing out the true view. He seeks to distinguish between "the light of nature," in the confessional sense, and "the light of grace," and on the next page (32) seems to identify "the light of grace" with "the light of the divine Logos," but whether that divine Logos be "the Holy Spirit in the heart" or "the incarnate Redeemer," is not made plain either here or elsewhere.

But our author seems to be a man of great resources, for, with his usual boldness, he claims the right to go beyond the teaching of the Confession on this point. After sitting in judgment on the Westminster divines, and finding their doctrine of *the reason* to be defective, he proceeds at once to give a place to the reason which they did not, and then he seeks to bend other sections of the Confession into line to support his own acknowledged extra-confessional views. Such procedure is surely a little remarkable when we call to mind the severe things our author says about the "modern dogmatians" for going beyond the teaching of the Westminster divines. Then he quotes from the Confession (chapters i., x., xiv., xvi., xviii.) to show that *the reason* is a great fountain of divine authority. If the reader will turn to these passages, he will find that they all relate either to the question of the evidences of the divine authority of the Scriptures, or to the work of the Holy Spirit in regenerating the soul. None of these passages can be fairly taken to prove our author's peculiar extra-confessional doctrine of *the reason* as a great fountain of divine authority.

Our author next tries to reason from Scripture to establish his doctrine concerning *the reason*. The Wisdom literature, Hebrews, Biblical history, and the origin and growth of the Old Testament religion are the facts which he seeks to use here. But all his reasoning only goes to show that the Scriptures always represent man as a religious being. But this needed no proof.

The third proof adduced to show that *the reason* is a great fountain of divine authority is "the condition of the world." Here our author speaks chiefly of the destiny of the human race, and says some startling things concerning the salvation

of the heathen. With amazing forgetfulness of some of the most solemn passages of Scripture, he seriously informs us (page 45) that "there is no statement in Scripture that forbids the comfortable hope that the pious Mohammedan or Buddhist, or worshipper of sacred fire, destitute of Bible and church, may be earnestly seeking after God in the only way open to him, through the forms of reason." With equal forgetfulness of the fact that the Scripture can be our only authority on such a subject, he adds (page 47): "Christians do not now believe this dogma of the universal damnation of the heathen, because the reason, the conscience, and the religious feeling in our times shrink back from it with horror." This surely is a new test of truth, especially of religious truth. It is false because men do not believe it. Thus the Bible is superseded, and the gospel need no longer be preached.

Our author's fourth argument on this subject is drawn from "The nature of man." The analysis of man's nature here given is very meagre, and it seems to reduce religion to morality in an attempt to transform the authority of conscience into an organ of religious authority in the human soul, overlooking the fact that God to whom conscience points has given an external revelation of his will to which even conscience must be in subjection.

The fifth proof by which our author supports his position is found in church history. The Rationalists (he does not say what school of them) are assured that they may have "the high privilege of communion with God in the Spirit, through the forms of reason." (P. 52.) He says further (p. 53), "May not God's Spirit work in the reason of a Rationalist? May we not take such an honest, straightforward, truth-seeking scholar as Martineau at his word when he says that he could not find authority in the church, or the Bible, but did find God enthroned in his own soul." But the testimony of Rationalists is not church history.

The last reason by which our author endeavors to make out a case for *the reason* is to be found in Christian experience. Indirectly (p. 54) he asserts that the Christian religion is not confined to the Bible and the church. Indeed, (p. 55) "it is only through immediate communion with God in the forms of reason that the higher Christian life is possible." So far as this has any significance, it can only mean that the sphere of religious experience as generated by the Spirit of God is the soul of man. If this is all our author means it does not prove his point; if he means more than this it is not true.

On the whole this lecture presents our author's views on *the reason* as a great fountain of divine authority in a more objectionable form than did the *Inaugural Address*. And not only does the vague and variable use of the term *reason* come out more distinctly, but there is a constant confusion between the inner religious experience of the soul, and the agent and instrument by which that experience is determined. The confusion seems hopeless.

The third lecture takes the three fountains of divine authority together, and seeks to define their relations. This is an exceedingly important and practical question, and after what our author has said in the first and second lectures, our curiosity is aroused to see what he has to say on the theme of the third.

He first explains what he means by "a fountain of authority." He says that "seat," "source," "medium," and "fountain," of authority all mean about the same thing, but we have sought in vain for any clear statement of what our author means by the phrase, "fountain of authority." Moreover, if one wished to be at

all critical, it would be easy to point out that "seat" and "fountain," "source" and "medium" do not mean quite the same thing. That our author does not always use the expressions in the same sense is evident from this remarkable passage on page 58: "It is not taught that the church is the original source of divine authority, apart from and independent of God." Can anything, Bible, church, or reason, be a source of authority in any sense at all apart from God? What is the difference between "source" and "original source"?

Discussing the question of the relation of the three great fountains of authority already described, our author leads us on to the very point, and then disappoints us beyond measure. He says that they are not coördinate, nor is any one of them to be subordinated to any other. Then, as if to evade answer altogether, he declines to define the relation they sustain to each other. Then, again, as if half ashamed of this mode of treating the subject, he goes on in a timid way, so unlike his usual style, to discuss their relations. Perhaps he is anxious not to offend Rationalists and Romanists, and desirous of preparing the way for the union of all in one happy family.

Our author makes an important distinction here, and lays great stress on it. Scripture has what he terms "unique authority," and consequently it alone is entitled to be regarded as "the only infallible rule of faith and manners." Here we have the distinction between "fountain of authority" and "rule of faith" to puzzle us again. We have three fountains of divine authority, and only one infallible rule of faith; but how these are to be adjusted to each other practically we are not told. Is the church a rule, but fallible? Is reason a rule, but liable to err? Is the Scripture a rule, and infallible? Surely there is confusion of thought and ambiguity of expression here. If the Scripture be the only infallible rule, is it not reasonable to conclude that it is qualified to give the law with authority alike to the church and the reason? If, therefore, the church and the reason have any authority, it is subordinate to, and derived from, the Scripture. In the last analysis, authority in religion roots in God. If God speaks in the Scriptures, we have therein a transcript of his will. That revealed will gives the constitution to the church, and the law to reason and conscience. This we believe to be the true doctrine.

The fourth lecture discusses the question of the "errancy" or "inerrancy" of the Scriptures, and the fifth treats of the higher criticism. The same doctrine appears in both as is found in the *Inaugural Address* and our author's other writings. Inviting as these subjects are, we cannot enter on them at length. How the Professor can consistently maintain that an errant Scripture can supply a really infallible rule in the sense in which he uses the terms, passes our comprehension. In an appendix he gives a long list of Biblical scholars who have enlisted among the higher critics. But he seems to swell his list by assuming that if a man is not a higher critic, he is not worthy to be ranked amongst the Biblical scholars of the day. In the list given it is a satisfaction to us that neither Southern nor Canadian Presbyterianism can boast of a single higher critic. But the subject is a wide one, and we dare not trespass further on time and patience.

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