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P. Schaff.

OTHER HERESY TRIALS AND THE BRIGGS CASE.

HERESY trials seem to be an anachronism in our age and country which allow the largest religious liberty consistent with public order and peace. On the continent of Europe they have ceased, at least in the Protestant churches. The theological professors in German, Swiss, and Dutch universities are not sworn to a creed or profession of faith; they are not responsible to an ecclesiastical tribunal, and they enjoy the widest latitude of investigation. But in this country, the theological seminaries are the creatures of churches; the teachers are appointed and supported by churches or by their representative boards, on the basis of a creed which they have to subscribe to.

It is a singular fact that theological and political freedom do not progress at equal pace. England, with greater political freedom, is more orthodox than the continent; Scotland is more orthodox than England; America is more orthodox than Europe; the West and the South are more orthodox than the East, in our country. The strictest Roman Catholics are not found in Italy and France, but in Ireland and in the United States. So the Episcopalians, the Presbyterians, and the Lutherans of this country are less liberal and progressive than their fellow-religionists in the Old World.

Heresy trials will, therefore, from time to time take place in those churches which hold and require subscription to a strict orthodox creed. They occur whenever a public teacher sets forth views which are inconsistent with such a creed and yet have sufficient vitality and power to command a respectable following and to disturb the peace of the denomination. They stir up all the bad blood of theological passions which are the deepest and strongest, and sometimes they result in division and schism. Heretics are no longer tortured, imprisoned, and roasted as in the Middle Ages; but they are deposed and expelled from their denominations if found guilty, with the liberty to join any other denomination willing to receive them, or to found a new sect of their own. But they are usually acquitted and restored, and in this case the result of a heresy trial is larger liberty and progress. This has been the experience of several heresy trials in the Presbyterian Church.

Orthodoxy and heresy are relative terms. Orthodoxy is conformity to an established and recognized creed; heresy is a departure from it. The term "orthodoxy" does not occur in the New Testament; "heresy" is mentioned several times in King James's version, for a Greek word which means "division," "party," "sect." The revised version retains it in 1 Cor. xi. 19; Gal. v. 20; and 2 Peter ii. 1. After the union of Church and State in the days of Constantine the ruling church of the Roman Empire was the orthodox church, and every one who publicly opposed its teaching was regarded and treated as a heretic. At the present time Christendom is divided into many churches and creeds, and to them correspond as many types of orthodoxy. There is a Greek orthodoxy which conforms to the seven ecumenical councils and the catechism of Peter Mogilas. There is a Roman Catholic orthodoxy which must agree with the Tridentine and Vatican standards. There is a Lutheran orthodoxy measured by the Augsburg Confession, an Anglican orthodoxy which holds to the Thirty-nine Articles and the Common Prayer Book; a Presbyterian or Calvinistic orthodoxy which conforms to the Westminster Confession and Catechisms. What is orthodoxy in one church may be heresy in another. Thus the Greek church holds that the *Filioque*, the doctrines of the immaculate conception of the Virgin Mary, and of the infallibility of the Pope, are heretical innovations of the church of Rome. Protestants reject these and other dogmas of Romanism such as transubstantiation, the sacrifice of the Mass, the invocation of saints, purgatory, indulgences, as anti-Scriptural errors; while Rome condemns all the distinctive doctrines of Protestantism as heresies. The Lutherans regard Zwingli's doctrine of the Lord's Supper as heretical; the Calvinists of the synod of Dort condemned the Arminian tenets concerning predestination, the extent of atonement, irresistible grace, and perseverance of saints, as errors, which were adopted by the Wesleyan Methodists, as truths. Baptists reject infant baptism and every mode of baptism but by immersion.

In this condition of conflicting creeds, who is to decide? Where is the infallible tribunal? The Greeks say, the ecumenical councils; but these have only defined the dogmas of the Nicene and Chalcedonian creed, and have ceased since 787. The Roman Catholics say, the Pope of Rome; but the Pope of Rome was not declared infallible till 1870, and Pope Honorius III. was condemned as a heretic both by an ecumenical council and by several popes. Thus we have council contradicting council and popes contradicting popes. Evangelical

Protestants say, the Bible; but the Bible is claimed by all churches and sects, and who is to decide between their various interpretations? The Rationalists say, the reason; but whose reason? Where there are six Rationalists there are seven reasons.

Here, then, comes in the whole question of the relationship between the Bible, the Church, and the Reason, and this is one of the most important questions raised by the Briggs trial. Of all the Protestant denominations in this country the Presbyterian is the most orthodox and has the most rigorous creed (the Westminster Confession), which carries the ponderous weight of the metaphysical and polemical theology of the seventeenth century. Hence she has had more heresy trials than any other church in America. Three of these trials have a historic interest beyond the limits of that denomination, and involve divines of national repute. We shall give a brief account of them, dwelling mostly on the last, which is still in progress.

Dr. Lyman Beecher, the father of the world-renowned family of that name, was in his day the greatest preacher in New England, and chief champion of Trinitarian orthodoxy against Unitarianism, but somewhat erratic and eccentric in his theological opinions. He was called from Boston as Professor of Theology to the newly founded Lane Seminary at Cincinnati in 1832. Dr. Stowe, his son-in-law, labored in the same institution. They imported New England notions and measures, which seemed to conflict with the Presbyterianism of the stricter Scottish type. Dr. Wilson, pastor of the First Church in Cincinnati, charged Dr. Beecher with holding and teaching Pelagian or Arminian views on free agency, total depravity, original sin, and regeneration, contrary to the Scriptures and the Westminster Confession of Faith which he had accepted at his installation.

The trial was held in 1835 and continued for several days with intense and unabated interest. It resulted in the complete vindication of Dr. Beecher by a nearly two-thirds vote of the Presbytery. Dr. Wilson appealed to the Synod and was again defeated. He appealed to the General Assembly, but asked and obtained leave to withdraw his appeal in obedience to the wishes of his friends and in view of the approaching trial of Dr. Barnes, which involved the same principles of sympathy with New England theology as taught by Dr. Taylor, of New Haven, and his intimate friend, Dr. Beecher.

Albert Barnes was one of the most learned, worthy, and popular preachers and authors in the United States, and his "Notes on the New Testament" had an enormous circulation (exceeding a million of

copies) in America and in England, especially among Sunday-school teachers. He studied theology at Princeton, entered the ministry in 1825, and was called to the First Presbyterian church of Philadelphia in 1830 (where he died in 1870).

Dr. Green brought charges against him in Presbytery for heretical doctrines preached in a sermon on "The Way of Salvation." The case created a great deal of commotion, action, and counter-action. Dr. Jenkins, President of Lafayette College, at Easton, Pa. (the father-in-law of Stonewall Jackson), became the chief prosecutor of Mr. Barnes and tabled ten definite charges of errors selected from notes in his Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans. Chief among them was the denial of the legal imputation of Adam's sin and guilt to his posterity, and of the imputation of Christ's righteousness to believers. Barnes did not deny hereditary sin, but only hereditary guilt. So far he sided with Arminianism, as also in regard to the extent of the atonement. The Synod of Pennsylvania condemned the alleged errors and suspended Barnes from the exercise of the functions of the gospel ministry until he should recant and repent. He submitted, and sat for a whole year Sunday after Sunday under his own pulpit listening to the preaching of a stranger,—a rare instance of meekness and humility, which reminds one of Fénelon, who published the papal condemnation of his own book, the "Maxims of Saints."

Barnes, however, could appeal to a higher earthly tribunal, which Fénelon could not. That was the General Assembly which met at Pittsburg in 1836. This Assembly spent a whole week in hearing his case and sustained the appeal by a vote of 134 to 96, and by a still more decisive vote restored him to the active ministry.

But the agitation between Old and New School theology continued with increasing force and animosity, and ended in a division. The General Assembly of Philadelphia in 1837 abrogated the Plan of Union between the Presbyterians and the Congregationalists (dating from 1801) as "unnatural and unconstitutional," without consulting the other party. The same Assembly cut off four Synods, the Western Reserve, Utica, Geneva, and Genesee, from the Presbyterian Church in the United States, and dissolved the third Presbytery of Philadelphia to which Dr. Barnes belonged—all without a hearing and without a trial, by an act of intolerance worthy of the Westminster Assembly which, in connection with the Long Parliament, deprived two thousand Episcopal ministers of their livings for the sole crime of non-conformity.

These excising acts split the church in two branches called the Old School and the New School, which held the same standards of doctrine and discipline, but differed in their interpretation, and were to all intents and purposes two different denominations. Dr. Beecher and Mr. Barnes survived the opposition and are numbered with the brightest luminaries in the horizon of American Christianity.

The schism in the Presbyterian church continued for more than thirty years, but was happily healed in 1870 on the basis of the Westminster standards pure and simple, leaving the question of interpretation and application open. This reunion was inspired by a truly Christian spirit of love and harmony and is one of the noblest events in American church history.

For twenty years the union continued unbroken, and a new generation arose which almost forgot that there was an Old School or a New School. Princeton and Union were on the best of terms, and united with other Presbyterian seminaries in the publication of a "Review," which for ten years discussed the leading theological questions and ecclesiastical events of the times under the joint editorship of professors of Princeton (Hodge, Patton, and Warfield), and a professor of Union (Briggs). The "Review," however, gave indications of a growing difference in theological sentiment concerning the inspiration and authority of the Bible and the attitude towards the results of "the higher criticism," so called, which deals with the Bible as literature and freely investigates the origin, value, and canonicity of the different books. The Beecher and the Barnes trials had to do only with purely American questions of theology; but since then American theology has been brought into close contact with the critical and historical researches of the theology of Europe, especially Germany, the great workshop of the Reformation and of modern Protestant learning.

In 1889 arose the revision movement which demanded important changes in the Westminster Confession, especially the elimination of the doctrine of preterition and the denunciation of the pope as "the antichrist" predicted by Paul, and of the papists as "idolaters." The movement spread with as much rapidity as the reunion movement had done twenty years before, and promises to result not only in a revision of the old confession but in the formation of a new, shorter, more scriptural, and popular creed, that shall express in an irenic, evangelical and catholic spirit, the living faith of the present age rather than the faith of the seventeenth century.

While the revision movement was going on, the peace of the church

was disturbed by another heresy trial which surpasses even the Beecher and the Barnes trials in importance and general interest.

Dr. Charles A. Briggs, the hero of the latest heresy trial which has attracted the widest notice of the secular as well as of the religious press of America, was born in the city of New York, January 15, 1841, and is consequently in the prime of manhood and usefulness. He studied in the University of Virginia (1859-60), and in the Union Theological Seminary at New York (1861-63) under Robinson, Henry B. Smith, and Hitchcock. He finished his theological education at Berlin, mainly under Rödiger and Dorner (1866-69), and familiarized himself with the latest phases and tendencies of German theology. After a short pastorate at Roselle, N. J. (1870-74), he was appointed tutor and soon afterwards Professor of Hebrew and Oriental Languages in the Union Theological Seminary (1874), and has been connected with it for the last seventeen years. He received the degree of D.D. from the University of Edinburgh at its tercentenary in 1883, which he attended as a delegate of the Union Seminary. In the autumn of 1890 he was transferred to the Edward Robinson chair of Biblical Theology (in the modern German sense of that term, as distinct from Ecclesiastical and Systematic Theology). He had been teaching this branch since 1883 when Dr. Schaff gave up the remainder of his lectures on the Old Testament (Critical Introduction and Old Testament Theology); but as the chair was only recently endowed, as a distinct professorship, by the liberality of the venerable Dr. Charles Butler, the president of the Board of Directors, in honor his friend, the distinguished Biblical scholar and explorer, Dr. Edward Robinson, it was deemed proper and due to the founder to have a formal induction by the usual solemnity of an inauguration.

Dr. Briggs accordingly, at the request of Dr. Butler, delivered an inaugural address on "The Authority of Holy Scripture," January 20, 1891.* This address was the occasion of the heresy trial. It contained little or nothing but what Dr. Briggs had previously taught and published in his books on "Biblical Study," "Messianic Prophecy," and "Whither?" as well as in several articles in the late "Presbyterian Review." Nor is there anything in the inaugural which would disqualify him for a theological professorship in any university of Europe. On the contrary, in Germany Dr. Briggs would be classed

* A third edition has just been published, December, 1891, by Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, which contains also notes and explanations, the charges of heresy, and the response thereto before the Presbytery of New York; 160 pages.

with the conservative and orthodox rather than with radicals and rationalists. He is, in fact, a Calvinist in everything except the questions of higher criticism, where he adopts the opinions of the school of Ewald and Wellhausen, though not without some modifications, and with a distinct disavowal of rationalism. He goes no further than Delitzsch in his last concessions. But he stated his views on the authority and inspiration of the Scriptures and the higher criticism in such a defiant and exasperating tone against what he called "bibliolatry," that the inaugural address sounded like a manifesto of war and aroused at once a most determined opposition on the part of the conservative and orthodox press. Even some of his best friends deemed it unwise and uncalled for. It is this aggressive style and manner which brought on the fight. The inaugural created a sort of panic, as if the Bible were in danger and the way opened for the teaching of downright rationalism in a leading institution of the Presbyterian Church.

It was under the influence of this panic that more than seventy Presbyteries overtured the General Assembly held at Detroit in May, 1891, to veto his appointment or transfer to the new chair.

The Union Theological Seminary, founded in 1836, was originally independent, while the Princeton Seminary was in the power of the General Assembly which elected both the professors and the directors. But under the influence of the reunion enthusiasm in 1870, the Union Seminary voluntarily surrendered a part of its independence, and secured to Princeton a much desired measure of freedom by giving to the General Assembly the veto power on the appointment of new professors; not meaning, however, that the veto should cover mere transfers of a professor, already a member of the Faculty, from one department of teaching to another. Such transfers occur frequently (I know of three in my own case), sometimes in the middle of a term, in consequence of sickness or of death, and belong to the internal administration of an institution whose directors and faculty are better able to judge than a General Assembly composed of delegates from all parts of the country and changing every year. The directors of the Seminary, at a meeting held shortly before the meeting of the General Assembly, recorded their views on this subject.

The Assembly, ignoring this difference, ignoring also the published statement of the faculty of the Seminary, and the categorical orthodox answers of Dr. Briggs to specific questions of the directors, exercised the veto power with an overwhelming majority of seven to one,

and virtually deposed Dr. Briggs without giving him a hearing and without even assigning a reason. At the same time the Assembly appointed a committee of conference with the directors of the Seminary; as if, after all, the Assembly might have erred in its action in the case. The proper order undoubtedly would have been to confer with the directors first, and to act afterwards on the result of the conference. This might have led to a peaceful settlement. This was the course proposed by Dr. Worcester, of Chicago (since called to the chair of Systematic Theology in the Union Seminary), and advocated with such sound arguments that, in the opinion of some, it would have been adopted if the vote had been taken at once. The specious plea of the advocates of immediate action was "now or never." It is the same plea which induced the General Assembly of 1837 to take advantage of an accidental majority in favor of the excising act. In a representative body, like the Assembly, the majority changes with the constituency.

It is but just to add that the action of the Assembly, whether right or wrong, was taken under the sincere conviction of actual danger of unsound doctrine, and without any personal ill-feeling against Dr. Briggs, whose learning and piety were freely acknowledged by his most decided opponents. In this respect the Assembly differs very favorably from former Assemblies in similar cases. Christian courtesy and good manners have evidently made progress and have moderated the *odium theologicum* and the *rabies theologicum*, from which the great and good Melancthon prayed to be delivered.

It so happened that a Princeton Professor of Theology, the learned and venerable Dr. Green, was Moderator of the Detroit Assembly, and that the president of Princeton University, the Rev. Dr. Patton, was chairman of the committee on Theological Seminaries, which proposed the exercise of the veto power and is immediately responsible for the whole action.

Under these circumstances the affair unfortunately assumed the aspect of a conflict between Princeton and Union, the two leading institutions of the American Presbyterian Church, which have heretofore labored on different lines within respectful distance, yet on cordial terms of friendship and co-operation in the service of the same church.

The directors of the Union Seminary, insisting upon their distinction between a new appointment and a transfer, and being satisfied with the general soundness as well as the scholarship and teaching ability of Dr. Briggs, who was known to them from seventeen years'

experience, disregarded the veto of the Assembly and adhered to their former action. The Assembly had, wisely or unwisely, acted on its own interpretation of the agreement of 1870, and the directors felt that they had the same right to act on their interpretation of the agreement which they themselves had proposed.

A meeting of the Assembly's Committee of Conference with the Directors of the Seminary was held last November, and another one will be held next January. Time will show whether they will come to an agreement or compromise of the delicate question which involves the further relation of all the Presbyterian seminaries to the General Assembly.

Before the meeting of the Assembly at Detroit the Presbytery of New York, the largest in the country, had taken Dr. Briggs in hand under the influence of the panic created by his inaugural, and resolved, April 13, 1891, to try him for heresy as a member of that Presbytery.* A committee of prosecution was appointed consisting of three clergymen and two laymen.* This committee reported to the Presbytery on October 5, 1891, and charged Dr. Briggs with teaching and publishing in said inaugural address "hurtful errors which strike at the vitals of religion and conflict irreconcilably with and are contrary to the cardinal doctrines taught in the Holy Scriptures and contained in the Standards of the Presbyterian Church." Two distinct charges were brought against him: one that he denied the fundamental doctrine of the infallibility and the sufficiency of the Scriptures as the only rule of faith and practice; and the other, that he taught progressive sanctification after death.

The first and principal charge was formulated under several specifications as follows. Dr. Briggs is charged with teaching:

1. That "there are historically three great functions of divine authority—the Bible, the Church, and the Reason;" thus making the Church and the Reason each to be an independent and sufficient fountain of divine authority. (The last clause is an inference of the committee not justified by the address, and expressly denied by Dr. Briggs.)

2. That some (like Cardinal Newman) may obtain the saving knowledge through the Church.

3. That others (like James Martineau) may find the knowledge of God through the Reason.

4. That the temperaments and environments of men determine which of the three ways of success to God they may pursue.

* The Rev. Drs. Birch, Lampe, and Sample, and Elders John J. Stevenson and John J. McCook.

5. That he "makes statements in regard to the Holy Scriptures which cannot be reconciled with the doctrine of the true and full inspiration of those Scriptures as the 'word of God written.'"

6. That he "asserts that Moses is not the author of the Pentateuch, and that Isaiah is not the author of half of the book which bears his name."

7. That he "teaches that predictive prophecy has been reversed by history and that much of it has not and never can be fulfilled."

The second charge is that Dr. Briggs teaches "a doctrine of the character, state, and sanctification of believers after death, which irreconcilably conflicts with and is contrary to the Holy Scriptures and the Standards of the Presbyterian Church."

These charges and specifications were sustained by quotations from Dr. Briggs's inaugural address and controverted by a mass of Bible passages (mostly irrelevant, and all from King James's version, even where it is decidedly wrong) and by whole sections of the Westminster Confession of Faith, including the twice repeated list of all the canonical books of the Old and the New Testaments. The report covers forty-five pages in print, and is one of the curiosities of American theological literature.

Dr. Briggs responded to these charges before a special meeting of the New York Presbytery on November 4, 1891, in a masterly legal and logical argument and, at the same time, in a tone of moderation which charmed his friends and disarmed his enemies. There is not an offensive nor discourteous word in the whole paper; he spoke *fortiter in re, suaviter in modo*. He made a manly and Christian confession of deep regret if he "had in any way, directly or indirectly, been the occasion of disturbing the peace of the Church," or if he "had given pain and anxiety to his brethren in the ministry, or to the people of Christ's church, by any utterances in the inaugural address." This tone and confession more even than the ability of the defence made converts, and accounts for the result which was a virtual vindication by a majority nearly of two-thirds (94 to 31). The resolution of the Presbytery is as follows:

"Resolved, That the Presbytery of New York, having listened to the paper of the Rev. Charles A. Briggs, D.D., in the case of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America against him, as to the sufficiency of the charges and specifications in form and legal effect, and without approving of the positions stated in his inaugural address, at the same time desiring earnestly the peace and quiet of the Church, and in view of the declarations made by Dr. Briggs touching his loyalty to the Holy Scriptures and the Westminster Standards, and

of his disclaimers of interpretations put on some of his words, deems it best to dismiss the case, and hereby does so dismiss it."

The Presbytery did not indorse the views of Dr. Briggs, but accepted his explanation and declaration of loyalty to the Holy Scriptures as sufficient to justify a dismissal of the trial. This is all that he and his friends could reasonably expect and desire. We would like to hope that this agitation might stop here, and that peace and good will between brethren be restored.

But the controversy is not yet closed. The committee of prosecution, which claims to be an independent party, has appealed from the decision of the New York Presbytery to the General Assembly which will meet next May, and may either try the case or dismiss it or send it back to the Presbytery for a new trial. We must wait the issue. In the mean time, Dr. Briggs, Dr. Brown, and Dr. Vincent are delivering lectures on the points of this Bible controversy before crowded audiences in the Church of the Covenant, in New York.

The response of Dr. Briggs is, technically, only an objection to the sufficiency of the charges and specifications "in form and in legal effect," as required by the Presbyterian Book of Discipline; but, indirectly, it is an explanation and defence of his inaugural address and is sufficient to free him from the charge of heresy.

1. Dr. Briggs reasserts his doctrine of the three sources of divine authority—Scripture, Church, and Reason; but denies that he meant to co-ordinate them, as charged. He always taught and still teaches the cardinal Protestant doctrine that the Bible is the only infallible rule of faith and practice. "The Reason," he says, "is a great fountain of divine authority, and yet not an infallible rule of faith and practice. The Church is a great fountain of divine authority, and yet not an infallible rule of faith and practice. The Bible is a great fountain of divine authority, and is the only infallible rule and practice."

The Bible is the shibboleth of Protestants, but is much higher than Protestantism; Church is the shibboleth of Romanists, but it is much higher than Romanism; the Reason is the shibboleth of Rationalists, but it is much higher than Rationalism; The Bible, the Church, and the Reason are one in God, the one supreme Source of all truth and authority.

2. As to questions raised by the higher criticism concerning the authenticity and canonicity of the several books of Scripture, they are extra-confessional and of modern date. They did not exist for the

Westminster Assembly which framed the Confession. They are perfectly legitimate and unavoidable in the theological class-room, and must be decided by the slow process of Christian scholarship. Dr. Briggs accepts—perhaps too hastily—the views of the liberal wing of the German critics concerning the post-Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, the post-Isaian origin of more than one-half of the prophecies under the name of Isaiah; but he nevertheless believes in the inspiration and authority of these portions of the Old Testament as fully as if they had been written by Moses and Isaiah. The authority of Scripture depends upon God and their intrinsic value, not upon man and the authority of the church. Several portions of the Bible—as the Book of Job, the “Orphan Psalms” so-called, and the Epistle to the Hebrews—are anonymous, and no scholar has been able or ever will be able to settle the question of their human authorship, but they are as much inspired and canonical as any other book.

3. As regards sanctification after death, Dr. Briggs denies that he holds the Roman doctrine of purgatory, or the Andover hypothesis of a future (falsely called a second) probation. He simply teaches the *progressive* sanctification of believers, as distinct from *immediate* and *absolute* sanctification, after death; that is, he holds that believers enter the middle state guiltless and sinless, yet not so perfect as to leave no room for continued growth in knowledge and every grace. Surely there can be no reasonable objection to such a view. It may not be quite consistent with the teaching of the Westminster standards, but the far more important question is whether it is scriptural and true. Modern scholars are agreed that the eschatology of the Protestant Reformers and Protestant Confessions is undeveloped, negative rather than positive, and stands in need of improvement. They denied the papal doctrine of purgatory, but they gave us nothing better in the place. They ignored the middle state between death and resurrection, and identified the state immediately after death with the final state after the resurrection.

This defect has affected even the Protestant versions of the Bible which confound the Greek and Hebrew terms for the middle state, or the spirit world, the region of the departed (Hades and Sheol), with hell or the state of torment (Gehenna). Hence the awful word “hell” occurs twice as often in the authorized version of the English Bible as in the Greek and Hebrew original. The revised version has corrected this mischievous error.

The authority of the Protestant Confessions of Faith is limited by

the cardinal Protestant doctrine of the supreme authority of the Bible. They are not *norma normans*, but *norma normata*. They are not rules of faith, but rules of public teaching. They are not infallible, and may be corrected and improved by better statements of divine truth, which must ever be the first and last aim of a theologian. *Amicus Augustinus, amicus Calvinus, sed magis amica veritas.*

The Presbyterian Church is just now engaged in a revision of the Westminster Confession and will undoubtedly eliminate from it certain obsolete and obnoxious features, as divine foreordination of sin and death, the limitation of the atonement to the elect, and the anti-popery clauses, and will put in a distinct declaration of the general love of God to all mankind and the sincere offer of salvation to every creature made in his image. This will be a serious modification of high Calvinism, though not of the Reformed system in the wider historical sense. The church has a perfect right to make such changes in obedience to the advance in liberal scholarship. She changed the Confession even more radically a hundred years ago in all those articles which assumed the union of Church and State and made it the duty of the civil government to protect orthodoxy and to punish heresy.

This is not an opportune time to stop the legitimate progress of theological investigation and science. Surely, the great Presbyterian Church of the United States should have room and to spare for such scholars as Dr. Briggs. She is orthodox and conservative enough, and can afford to be tolerant and liberal without running any risk. She has too much intelligence, good sense, and solid piety to be thrown off her balance. Christian scholars who combine faith with learning and critical ability are rare and now more needed than ever, to disentangle the Scriptures from traditional embarrassments such as the theory of a literal inspiration or dictation, and the absolute inerrancy of the original autographs which nobody has ever seen or will see—for they are irretrievably lost. These are human fictions contradicted by undoubted facts, and make it impossible to defend the Bible against the objections of critics, historians, and scientists. The Bible is independent of all human theories of inspiration and stands upon the impregnable rock of truth. It is not a manual of geology, or biology, or astronomy, or chronology, or history, or science. Even the Pope of Rome does not claim infallibility in any of these departments. The Bible is a book of religion, a rule of faith and duty, no more, no less; and as such it can and will maintain its authority and power to the end of time.

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PHILIP SCHAFF.

