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v. 4

THE MAIN ISSUE.

A Straight Question

—TO—

Professor Briggs.



This pamphlet was in circulation at the
Several Assembly at Saratoga, May
1890: or on record after the Committee
and in 1891.

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THE SARATOGA NEWS COMPANY,
SARATOGA SPRINGS, N. Y.

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THE MAIN ISSUE.

A Straight Question to Professor Briggs.

While the creed-revision movement will probably not accomplish its conscious aims, it cannot leave the great and scholarly Presbyterian Church as it found it, and its incidental effects will be the most important. One of these deserves immediate notice. The movement threatens to obscure the main religious issue of the age. It is largely the work of a party of whom a representative and leader is Professor Charles A. Briggs, the foremost American Old Testament scholar; and it has come in the nick of time to divert attention and attack from Professor Briggs' own province of scholarship, by setting the denomination by the ears upon such matters as justification by faith, infant salvation, the middle state, reprobation, and the divine attributes. It could not more certainly have produced this effect if it had been so designed. And, so far, this has been its most important effect.

For, as Dr. McCosh has wisely observed, the issue involved in the new biblical learning must take precedence of all other theological questions. Whether of his own choice or not, Professor Briggs stands, not for creed-revision, nor for the importation into the middle and western states of the nugatory middle-state controversy, which has trivialized and otherwise cursed New England,—but for the new scholarship. His ambition may be satisfied with the leadership of a party in the Presbyterian

Church ; his fate has made him the leader of the party of the higher criticism on this continent. His two standard works, "Biblical Study" and "Messianic Prophecy," lie on the working desks of thousands of young clergymen of all denominations, who are learning therefrom the methods, and imbibing the spirit, and adjusting themselves to some of the results of the new criticism. It affects their preaching and their teaching, if they dare to teach ; for many of them will not teach in their own Sunday schools, explaining privately to one another that they cannot submit to the cross-examination of zealous ignorance. To these men the new criticism has brought questions which throw all those raised by the creed-revision movement into the background. And Professor Briggs has won this constituency by the fact that his fearless scholarship on the one hand, and his unchallenged occupancy of a chair in a Presbyterian theological seminary on the other, seemed to warrant the confidence that he could solve these questions. His books would have been religiously avoided by many who are now under their spell, had they not felt assured that such as he must be able to reconcile the new scholarship with the old theology. Hence, if there is any doubt of his having done so, he owes it to those of his pupils who cannot be led off on a false trail by the hue and cry of creed-revision, to resolve that doubt. Such doubt there is, and to it this essay seeks to give definite expression.

It is no secret that, outside a small circle of specialists, the considerable interest, both friendly and hostile, which the new biblical scholarship excites in this country, has theological motives behind it. American Christianity is a theological Christianity, at the same time that it honestly

believes and boasts itself to be a Bible Christianity. For it is founded not merely upon the Bible, but upon the Bible regarded with a particular attitude of mind; which attitude theology has determined. Change or ignore the theology and that attitude is liable to change. Change that attitude, and, for all that ninety-nine persons in a hundred can be made to see, you may as well destroy the Bible itself and Christianity with it. The old scholarship was trusted; for it seemed to have taken its brief from the old theology. The new scholarship is distrusted; for it is a department of the new science, with which the old theology has no dealings.

The reason the old theology has no dealings with the new science is that while the one depends upon the definite affirmation of the supernatural, the other cannot survive such definite affirmation. Take away the supernatural from the old theology, and it is a bald and non-religious form of metaphysical deism. Impose the supernatural in the same sense upon the new science, and it is paralyzed. Many scientific men, it is true, profess belief in the supernatural. But they are invariably specialists, whose scientific horizon is bounded by their own departments; while the supernatural which each believes in is always in some other department,—as though each felt that he could take care of his own province, but “God help the departments that have not our services!” A renowned jurist writes down Darwinism. A botanist protests against applying the scientific method to ethics. A famous astronomer defends the Bible miracles,—except Joshua’s stationary sun and the migratory star of Bethlehem; here he shifts the supernatural into some department for the integrity of whose natural order he

has less personal concern. Of jurists, however, who applied the test of the hot plough shares, of botanists who patched up apparent breaks in natural sequence with the aid of teleology, of astronomers who explained comets as divine messengers not subject to the laws of celestial mechanics, the generation is extinct. No teacher of science to-day puts his finger upon a specific fact and says to his class: "This had no natural cause, and was produced by a direct supernatural intervention." A story is, indeed, being told of a professor of biology who has agreed, as a condition of his appointment, to teach supernaturalism in his department. But the story has its chief circulation as a joke among other specialists in the same line. The science of this age may be all wrong; but its mind is made up. It tolerates or even patronizes the supernatural at a distance. It treats with the indifference of contempt any supernatural claim which proposes to stand in the way of its next step.

This disagreement between the old theology and the new science is not to be explained away by any double sense of the term. What the one affirms is the same which the other denies. Too zealous peacemakers have been fain to reduce the claims of theology to special design or final cause. This will not satisfy the old theology. It maintains not only special divine purpose but special divine causation. The interest of the old theologian in the discovery of special designs grew out of the inference which he supposed could be drawn therefrom as to supernatural causes. Science did not disprove the designs; she simply brought to light adequate natural causes. And with the discovery of these adequate causes the theologian's interest in the designs vanished, and

his affirmation of divine causation retreated from the specific toward the generic. The goal of this retreat is either pure deism or immanent theism, which alike affirm only a generic relationship of the divine and the human. The old theology dare not retreat as far as that.

The instinct of American Christianity has made it as shy of immanent theism as of deism. Its practical wisdom has shown it that the doctrine of a generic divinity is not a sufficient basis for an aggressive popular religion. To succeed, such a religion must assume that it has, not only a particular divine revelation, but a particular divine causal activity. American Christianity therefore believes that its continued existence depends upon its faith in the specific exercise of supernatural power; and, since it regards the Bible as its foundation, it looks with peculiar horror upon the surrender of the principle of supernatural causation with respect to the Bible. For this reason the old scholarship, instigated by the old theology, with the whole force of popular Christianity at its back, is making a desperate stand against the effort to discover natural causes for the Bible and for the ideas which it embodies. The issue is unmistakable, and concerns the continuity or the discontinuity of the order of natural causes in the case of the origin of the Bible. The old theology, as the exponent of the religious life of the people, demands the assumption of discontinuity. The new scholarship, as a department of the new science, must assume continuity.

How has Professor Briggs met this issue in his effort to harmonize the new scholarship and the American type of Christianity? Has he been able to transplant the scientific scholarship of Wellhausen and Kuennen without their pure naturalism? The religious instinct of the

masses is deeply suspicious as to the possibility of it,—that instinct which taught a great Sunday school journal that it had better pay forfeits than continue to print articles bargained for from an Oxford scholar. Dr. Green still ranks as the supreme authority in the *Sunday School Times*. But Dr. Briggs is cherished in a high position in the Presbyterian Church. And he has with him a powerful, if rather silent, minority of the ministry; while a majority of the well-informed clergy and laity are pondering with great seriousness the question of the relation of the new scholarship and the old theology, the question of the supernatural.

The best way to learn Professor Briggs' attitude on that question is to review his treatise on "Messianic Prophecy," in which he "traces the Messianic idea in its development in the Old Testament Scriptures." (p ix.) For this work "the author has spent many years in preparation." "It has cost him more labor than all other topics combined. It has been a labor of love and enthusiasm." (p xv.) It "is designed chiefly for theological students and ministers." (p xiii.) Yet "the author desires that it may be of value to the thoughtful layman and to Sabbath school teachers." (p xv.) The book has won its place as a standard work, confirming the verdict of an eminent professor in another Presbyterian theological seminary: "If there still be, as of course there still are, among us any to whom the Higher Criticism is identical with unchristian speculation, or necessarily moved by atheistic" (i. e. anti-supernaturalistic) "bias, we commend to them this volume." (Dr. H. P. Smith, in Pres. Rev., Vol. VIII, p 351.) Thus the volume is vouched for, by a friendly yet competent critic, as both

genuine higher criticism, and at the same time not anti-supernaturalistic. This makes it worth while to inquire what disposition it makes of the supernatural.

The main question will be whether this “development of the Messianic idea in the Old Testament Scriptures” is represented as a true evolution, conforming to the law of continuity. Omitting the difficult problem of the origin of the prophetic germ, the Protevangelium, which appears to be prehistoric, are there adequate causes, in the inherent vitality of this germ, and in historical and individual experience, to account for its growth into the perfect Messianic ideal? Or did other than natural causes intervene at certain points?

The author approaches the problem of the development of the Messianic idea through a discussion of Hebrew prophecy in general and of predictive prophecy in particular. In these preliminary chapters his theoretical attitude toward the supernatural should be discovered. In the first chapter we learn that he regards no particular phase of prophecy as peculiar to the Hebrew. Nor is genuine prophecy peculiarly Hebrew; since there is genuine prophecy that is not Hebrew, and Hebrew prophecy that is not genuine. And there is supernatural, or, as he calls it, “divine” prophecy that is not Hebrew, and Hebrew prophecy that is merely instinctive or natural. Neither is supernatural prophecy the same as genuine prophecy; for there is genuine prophecy, both Hebrew and heathen, which is not supernatural. A test of genuineness is given. (p 22.) No test of supernaturalness is given. The only test of supernaturalness is the infallible assurance of the soul of his prophet; but this is subjective, and with no means of making itself objectively

valid. The author attempts to discriminate between theophanies, or objective visions, whereby the greater prophets received their revelations, and the mere internal subjective assurance of the ordinary prophet. (pp 20, 21.) But these theophanies were objective only to those who saw them; no way is designated by which they could be made objective to others or distinguished from hallucinations. The author admits that "the infallible assurance of the soul of the prophet may be difficult to distinguish from the false assurance of enthusiasts and the confident self assertion of the prophet of lies." (p 23.) If the prophecy does not conform to truth he would not allow that it is supernatural, no matter how infallibly assured the soul of the prophet may have been. That is a lame test, however; for, although non-conformity to truth might be held to disprove supernaturalness, (though that has often been disputed), conformity to truth cannot prove supernaturalness. For it is admitted that there are truthful prophecies which are not supernatural, and these may be spoken by deluded enthusiasts or lying pretenders who affirm an infallible subjective assurance of their supernaturalness.

It thus appears that there is no way to distinguish supernatural prophecy from instinctive or natural prophecy, no way to show that the prophet's conviction of a divine impulse is not mistaken. A pupil of Professor Briggs who seeks to explain on natural grounds these assurances of divine impulse on the part of the prophets, need not controvert his teacher. The teacher himself betrays so strong a tendency to minimize the supernatural that he quotes with approval a remark of Riehm that "it is sufficient that we recognize the divine origin of the

communication as external to the soul of man. There are no sufficient reasons for extending the external origin to the form and the words of the communication. The stimulation of the higher nature of man by a divine impulse is all that can be proven with reference to the mass of Hebrew prophecy." (p 14, note.) And even that stimulation has to be inferred from the fact that the man believes that his mind has been not only stimulated but actually informed. If we discount the prophet's conviction that the form of the communication is divinely caused, why not also his conviction that the stimulus was of divine origin?

It must be said, therefore, that, so far as the first chapter is concerned, Professor Briggs abandons the alleged supernatural impulse, providing no test of its reality, and crowding it off into the department of psychology, or that of religious experience, for the integrity of the causal order in neither of which departments is he as a specialist responsible. There is, however, in this chapter a certain kind of supernatural which the author does not deprecate or leave to its fate, seemingly because he has chosen it as a delicacy to gratify his own taste for naturalizing. That which is characteristic of Hebrew prophecy is its prophetic organism, embodying an ideal of which he says that "it is higher and grander than any other known to man; it is so much higher and grander that it separates Hebrew prophecy from all other prophecy. It gives it a unique position and importance. If it be not divine in origin and direction, whence did it originate?" (p 29.) Since the Professor's answer is that "it *is* divine," we naturally expect him to go on and point out whereabouts the divine energy intervenes. I'll

stead of doing this he runs into an argument to the effect that it probably must have intervened somewhere because of the uniqueness of the idea. He is a trifle shaky, however, about this, and concedes that "we do not claim that such an idea could not be evolved by the human mind, but in fact such an idea has not been evolved in any other religion." (p 29.) It certainly has not; neither have the Buddhistic nor the Platonic conceptions had more than one development each. Great ideas are likely to be unique in origin. Equally unfortunate is Professor Briggs' argument when he says that "the human soul is capable of this divine knowledge and Hebrew prophecy gives the divine knowledge that satisfies the soul. This is an evidence that prophecy had a divine source." (p 30.) The current scientific notion is that when the soul gets precisely what ideals it has an appetency for, the presumption is strong that it has created them for itself; so that this proof would be claimed in the other direction. • The illuminating thing however about this contention of the Professor for the supernatural origin of the prophetic ideal, is the nature of this ideal when he comes at last to define and classify it. "The doctrines of the Hebrew prophets," he says, "transcend the powers of human apprehension and conception, and, *like the sublime ideas of the reason,—form and time and space,—circumscribe human experience and invoke the Deity to explain them as conceptions of the divine mind.*" (p 31.) (Italics ours.) It turns out then that the only supernatural the Professor cares to maintain is one that belongs to the same category with form, and time and space! Does he, as a specialist, concern himself for the integrity of the natural order with respect to the genesis of the ideas of

time and space? Science will not quarrel with him about a supernatural of this sort, but will relegate the question of its origin to the proper specialists, and will agree with him when he says that "call this ideal what we please, natural or supernatural, it matters not." (p 29.)

It does matter though, to the old theology; upon which the attempt is made to palm off this as a legitimate supernatural which can act as a cause to disrupt the natural order. This is a changeling. It is not the supernatural the Professor started out with. He tired of that, and abandoned it to the psychologist to be anatomized, while he was supplied with this by the questionable fairy of immanent theism. That was definable as "a divine impulse," and belonged to the class of special causes, and would have broken the line of continuity, and satisfied the old theology. This, charming and provocative of eloquence as it is, is no proper cause at all; nor is it such an effect as to warrant the inference of a specific cause.

So far then as concerns the first chapter the author does not actually maintain any position which is inconsistent with the scientific assumption of continuity, at least in his own special department. His strong assertions in behalf of supernaturalism appear upon analysis to be little better than rhetoric, and he is practically on excellent terms with pure naturalism.

A review of the chapter on "Prediction," yields similar results. A blank cartridge is fired at the arch naturalist Kuenen, and then he is quoted effectively against the scholastics. The prophecies are admitted to be predictive only as to "the essential and ideal" elements, such as belong to the same category with

"form and time and space." By way of emphasizing this, attention is called to the fact that Jesus was similarly limited, that it was inevitable that not only the prophets, but Jesus himself, should mistake about the times of fulfilment, (p 52); that predictions "*cannot transcend the psychological and physical features of human nature,*" (p 55); that the prophet only "*foresees the final goal, but not the intervening conditions or circumstances,*" (p 56); that "*the prophet knows not times or seasons,*" (p 57); that "*there is an uncertain factor in all prediction, which depends upon the ever varying relations of God and man in the interplay of human freedom and divine law. The variation of forces in the divine mind and in human experience, and the corresponding variations of forces in history, shorten or prolong, simplify or make complex and uncertain all preparatory times and events,*" (p 58); that "*history advances with prophecy toward the same goal,*" (p 63), (Italics the Professor's); that "*thus we ought to expect that the Messianic ideal should be realized in some of its phases ere the ideal itself is attained, and that the later predictions should base themselves upon these partial realizations,*" (p 65).

In short, the Professor follows the line indicated in his approving quotation from Tholuck, that "it is not prediction of the accidental but of that which is of religious necessity which is the essential thing in Hebrew prophecy." (p 44.) Prediction of that which is "of religious necessity" will satisfy science, but not the old theology, which has always maintained the prediction of the accidental, as a ground for the inference of supernatural intervention. Prediction of that which is of religious necessity ranks with predictions based upon the

law of gravitation. The law itself "may be called natural or supernatural, it matters not;" but there need be nothing supernatural either in the discovery or the application of the law, or in the instinctive (to use the author's word) application of the law in advance of its discovery.

The answer to the main question might now almost be anticipated. What part does Professor Briggs assign to the supernatural in the course of the growth of the Messianic idea from the germ to the perfected form? Does he put his finger upon any spot and say: "Here intervened a supernatural cause"? His study is summed up in such words as these: "Hebrew prophecy indicates its reality, its accuracy, its comprehensive ideality as a conception of the divine mind, as a deliverance of the divine energy, as a system constructed by holy men who spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit." (p 498.) "None but God could give such prophecy." (p 499.) A stranger to the book, glancing at the last two pages, would infer that this was an induction, and that many examples of the direct operation of the "divine energy" had been noted in the course of the development of prophecy. He would turn to the chapters that deal with the critical phases of that development, where long steps were taken from lower to higher conceptions, expecting to see the insufficiency of naturalistic explanations set forth, and the points designated where the "divine energy" operated. Would his expectation be fulfilled?

The two most important steps in the progress from lower to higher and more adequate conceptions are the transition from the idea of retributive to that of disciplinary suffering, and the further transition from the idea

of disciplinary to that of vicarious suffering. Of the introduction of the disciplinary idea, (Isa. 4: 2-6), the author says: "This prediction is of great importance. It really opens up two new phases of the Messianic idea." (p 194.) Not a word, however, about supernatural causation. On the contrary, stress is laid upon the greatness and many-sidedness of Isaiah, and the fruitful conditions of the times. In preface to the quoted prediction it is said that he combines "the excellence of all who had gone before him, adapting and building into the system of his prophecy the best thoughts of his contemporaries and predecessors, yet with such an originality and appropriateness of setting that no one could regard him as a copyist or plagiarist." (p 190.) His prophecies "spring up out of the circumstances of the historical present in order to leap forth into the most distant future." (p 191.)

The failure to affirm the supernaturalness of the prediction which "really opens up two new phases of the Messianic idea" becomes the more conspicuous when compared with the treatment, immediately preceding it, of the alleged prediction of the betrayal of Jesus, (Zech. 11: 12, 13), a prediction which Matthew positively claims as applicable to details. This the author sets aside, saying that "the correspondence, in fact, is not owing to the precision of the prophetic tradition, but to the correspondence in situation between the rejected Jahveh of the times of the decay of the northern kingdom of Israel, and the rejected Messiah of the New Testament." (p 190 note.) With equal positiveness does the author brush aside that *locus classicus* of a theology which rested on the prediction of accidentals, (Isa. 7: 13-17) wherein the birth of the Messiah from a

virgin is supposed to have been foretold, another of the predictions quoted by Matthew. The Professor says that "the significance of the sign is in the child and in his name, and not in the mother. The Hebrew word might mean a virgin, but it does not in itself convey the idea of virginity. If the prophet wished to emphasize virginity he would have doubtless used another and more definite term." (p 196.)

The most important thing in prophecy is the development of the idea of a suffering Messiah. To this the author devotes many pages, the general tenor of which may be indicated by the following quotations: "The exile was a bitter experience for the pious Israelite The pious were indeed the greatest sufferers, for they shared the persecutions to which Jeremiah and others like minded had been subjected." (p 320.) "Piety was now synonymous with affliction and sorrow. The ideal of the suffering Messiah had its genesis in these circumstances, and yet it was not without connection with earlier Messianic prophecies The problem of redemption became complicated, owing to the fact that not only did the sinner suffer for his evil deeds, but the righteous man He suffered no longer for sin but for righteousness sake This conception is found in germ in the Protevangelium. . . . It is also contained in the covenants with Abraham and David. What Egypt was to the seed of Abraham that the exile became to the seed of David." (p 321.) "But the circumstances of the exile, and especially the experience of the persecuted Jeremiah and his associates, taught the people of God lessons they had never learned before. It seems probable that Jeremiah was the type of the great

sufferer, for he was the hero of the exiles, the great historical sufferer for God. He is the basis of the representation, but the divine Spirit guided the psalmists to discern and describe a sufferer whose experience was more bitter than that of Jeremiah, and whose sufferings were rewarded with a redemption which Jeremiah did not gain." Yet,—and it is the next sentence,—"there is a vividness of intense realization of suffering on the part of these psalmists. They must have been great sufferers themselves. They describe sufferings in such minute details, and with such an intensity of feeling, that these must be real though extravagant The psalmists sink deep in the apprehension of their own sorrows, but these lead to depths of woe which are apprehended in the imagination and fancy through foreboding and presentiment." (p 322.) "These psalms of the great sufferer prepare the way for the suffering servant of Isaiah 53." (p 336.) This second Isaiah "stands on the loftiest peak of prophecy. He masses more Messianic predictions in his book than any of the prophets that preceded him. He carries the Messianic idea to a much higher stage of development, so that he becomes the evangelical prophet, who seems to be the nearest to the Messiah and the theology of the New Covenant. The circumstances of the exile were favorable to this. It is doubtful whether it was possible for a prophet living in the land of Israel." (p 337.) "But the prophecy of the great unknown reflects the experience of a prophet who had lived long in exile." (p 338.) "The prophet now advances to the climax of these sufferings. They culminate in death. This is described as the sacrifice of a sheep, and as the death of a martyr." (p 362.) "The

prophet finally represents that this suffering has been in order to accomplish a plan of redemption When this has been accomplished the condition of humiliation has come to an end and the exaltation of the servant begins. There is no explicit mention of a resurrection, but this is implicitly involved, for he who has died a martyr's death must rise from the dead in order to receive the rewards of his service This prophecy of the servant who dies and rises from the grave finds its only fulfilment in the death of Jesus Christ, and his resurrection and exaltation to his heavenly throne." (p 363.)

It is not strange that Professor Briggs could say of such a piece of work as the above that it was "a work of love and enthusiasm." But an outsider can hardly resist the impression that the seductions which have won his love, and the charms which have aroused his enthusiasm, are those of modern science, with its fascinating principle, which he has so aptly and faithfully applied, of the continuity of the natural order of development; and if not a few of the younger clergy have been lured by the same seductions into the embraces of naturalism, Professor Briggs' contagious enthusiasm must share the responsibility for it. In but two instances in the whole course of this discussion is any disposition shown to recognize the supernatural. There is a cautious and minimizing statement concerning the prediction of a resurrection of the slain prophet. The author does not say that there was any such prediction, but only that the exaltation foretold logically involved a resurrection. It is doubtful whether, if the issue were raised, he would be willing to say that a Jew of that period would have seen it in that light, or that the prophet had in mind anything more than a post-

humous vindication. If the prophet had seemed to draw the logical inference of a resurrection, would we not find the author explaining it away, as he explained the alleged prediction of the betrayal?

The other case where the supernatural seems to be invoked, is where it is said that the divine Spirit guided the psalmists beyond the experience of Jeremiah. But, as though at once to propitiate frowning science for such a tribute to her rival, he hastens to explain that their own sufferings must have been intense and that the depths of woe which they described without having fathomed them in experience, "were apprehended in imagination and fancy through foreboding and presentiment." It is not intimated that this foreboding and presentiment contained any elements that exceeded the natural powers of the imagination under the stimulus of spiritual influences which are a part of the natural order; like as, according to immanent theism, the divine Spirit belongs to the natural order, exerting a purely generic influence which does not interfere with causal continuity.

Professor Briggs, then, seems to have applied, with practical consistency, to the development of the Messianic idea, the same principles and methods which he employed in the chapters on prophecy in general and on prediction. He has said nothing concerning any alleged supernatural events which he need ever retract should they all be shown to be quite natural. He has turned off graceful though elusive phrases in praise of a kind of supernatural, which, when cornered and captured, evades criticism by classifying itself with the "ideas that circumscribe experience," "form and time and space." In short, he banishes miracles, in the sense in which Amer-

ican Christianity understands miracles, from the course of development of Messianic prophecy.

Will American Christianity stand that? If the leading professor in one of the two leading schools of the most learned and orthodox of the great denominations, can naturalize away by far the most important miraculous element in the Old Testament, and coolly promise, (p viii), a second volume upon the same subject as found in the New Testament, and a third upon that subject in Christian history, in which presumably the same method will be employed; what will be left of the supernatural to the American Church, after that promise has been fulfilled, and the other two volumes have won such a place of influence in the minds of the younger clergy as the first already holds? Can American Christianity survive such a revolution as that implies? Is it ready to meet such a crisis?

"It is incredible," the reader will say on first impulse; "Professor Briggs cannot have meant any such thing. He could not have continued to hold the leading position he does, if he had meant such a thing." There is something in that; and the Professor's failure to make his supernaturalism unequivocal is probably because, for some good reason, this issue was not distinctly before his mind. But it is before the mind of the American Church, and it is the purpose of this paper to emphasize it, and to protest against its being obscured by controversy about secondary questions, however important. It is not claimed that the foregoing criticism warrants a verdict against Professor Briggs of having denied supernatural intervention; but only that it has convicted him of failure to make his attitude as unmistakable as the public has a right to de-

mand of a specialist and author and teacher of teachers, and a champion of a party which is openly accused of naturalism.

For this reason the attempt is here made to render articulate the questioning attitude of a large and respectably well informed public, toward that school of biblical learning to which Professor Briggs belongs, and for which he has, as few others, the right, the ability and the proved courage to speak. If he would trouble himself to answer the following questions, suggested by a study of his "Messianic Prophecy," he would do much to clear the atmosphere of religious inquiry in this country.

QUESTIONS.

Does Professor Briggs think of the divine as holding a specific, and not merely a generic, relationship to the order of nature?

Does he think of the divine as acting, at points within the historical period, as a specific genetic cause, determining specific events?

In case it seems to him to act as a specific cause *within* the mind of a prophet, as, for instance, in the region of "the imagination and fancy through foreboding and presentiment," does he deny, concerning any particular and well established case within the range of his special Old Testament studies, that a psychologist might explain it on naturalistic principles?

If so, will he name one or more such cases, and say whether his denial is made as a specialist in psychology, or as a specialist in Old Testament literature?

In case the divine or supernatural element affirmed belongs in the category with "the sublime ideas of the

reason,—form, and time and space,” will he point out whereabouts, within the course of history, the supernatural cause intervened in behalf of these ideas?

Does he regard himself as a specialist upon the question of the origin of the ideas “that circumscribe experience?”

Does he affirm the occurrence of any specific act of supernatural intervention, either of the kinds above referred to, or any of any other kind, in the course of the development of the Messianic idea from its germ in the Protevangelium to its completed form?

If so, will he, as a specialist in that department, put his finger upon some such specific intervention?

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