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The trial of Dr. Briggs

THE TRIAL OF DR. BRIGGS



THE

TRIAL OF DR. BRIGGS

BEFORE THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

A Calm Review of the Case

BY

A STRANGER

WHO ATTENDED ALL THE SESSIONS OF THE COURT

[R. J. Laidlaw.]

NEW YORK

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PREFACE.

WHILE the writer of the following review believes that the majority of the members of the General Assembly at Washington were mistaken in their opinions of the views of the Rev. Professor Briggs, D. D., he at the same time cherishes sincere respect for the Assembly as the supreme court of a church of Jesus Christ.

He believes that the circumstances surrounding the trial of Dr. Briggs were of such a nature that error on the part of the court was unavoidable, and that it is therefore no reflection upon the court to point out wherein it may be shown to have erred. In doing this he has sought to avoid any word that might be regarded as disrespectful either to the Assembly as a whole or to any of its members.

He has at the same time sought to be strictly impartial and overlook no important point, whether favorable or unfavorable on either side.

He has not written in a contentious spirit, but dispassionately in the interests of truth and peace.

Believing that the truth has not been apprehended, by reason of obscurities by which it has been clouded

to the minds of those standing nearest to the consideration of it, he has felt called upon by the peculiar circumstances in which he was placed as a stranger and a lover of the truth, to contribute his share toward dispelling those obscurities that, if possible, Christian brethren now unhappily at variance may be helped to see eye to eye.

Believing that peace can be established only on the basis of purity of doctrine, and that doctrines which have appeared to be heretical can be seen in their true light only by a careful reconsideration of the questions at issue in the light of all the evidence and arguments presented on both sides, the writer of the following review has undertaken this task, praying that the Holy Spirit, whose guidance has been sought in the accomplishing of it, may make use of the following pages as a help toward promoting the peace of Jerusalem and the prosperity of Zion.

This only need be added: Neither the Rev. Dr. Briggs, nor any other minister or member of the Presbyterian Church in the United States has had any knowledge of the writing of this review. The writer has assumed the sole responsibility for the writing of it, and for every sentiment it contains, and has withheld his name that the views presented may be judged according to their merits, apart from the influence of any name whether obscure or the reverse.

R. J. Laidlaw

AUGUST, 1893.

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A REVIEW
OF
THE TRIAL OF DR. BRIGGS.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY.

AS I happened to be on a visit to the American Republic and its Capital during the meeting of the PRESBYTERIAN GENERAL ASSEMBLY in May last, I availed myself of the opportunity of being present at all the sessions of the BRIGGS TRIAL.

I had never seen the Rev. Dr. Briggs and had taken but little interest in his case. I had read his inaugural in the quiet of my study shortly after its first appearance, but only laid it aside as the utterance of a scholar who seemed to have no hesitation about leaving the beaten track and extending his investigations into fields which are commonly regarded as the peculiar domain of heterodoxy.

I was aware that some of the writings of the author of the address were regarded by many as heretical in their tendencies if not in their teaching, and my reading of the inaugural gave me additional insight into the reasons for this opinion.

As time passed and the question of the orthodoxy of the views of Dr. Briggs came before the Detroit Assembly, and a year later the Portland Assembly, and as this question was once and again considered by the Presbytery of New York, I, in common with others, gained a general knowledge of the question through the religious and secular press, but not such information as enabled me to come to a definite conclusion as to the merits of the case.

The questions raised seemed to be such as could be settled only by a careful, critical study of them. I knew, however, that in the Presbyterian Church in the United States there was no scarcity of scholars capable of giving those questions the best consideration; and I hoped to have the privilege, at the Washington Assembly, of hearing the views of so scholarly a man as Dr. Briggs set forth by himself, and of hearing the replies of other scholars so clearly presented as to set the church, if not the world, at rest regarding the question of Dr. Briggs' agreement or want of agreement with the standards of the Presbyterian Church.

The occasion seemed to afford an excellent opportunity for doing this. Many of the five or six hundred commissioners composing the Assembly were men of learning, and all of them were earnest and conscientious men. The promptness and general skill and fairness of the moderator could not easily have been excelled. The apparent equanimity of all the members of the court seemed also to be peculiarly favorable.

I felt, at the opening of the proceedings, that if Dr. Briggs failed to prove that his views were Scriptural and orthodox, it must be either because they were not, or because he would fail to make the best use of his opportunity, or else because of something operating on the minds of his auditors to prevent them from giving due weight to his statements.

I felt, on the other hand, that if the opponents of the views of Dr. Briggs failed to prove to the satisfaction of all that his views were unscriptural and heretical, it must either be because they were not, or because those opposing them would not make the best use of their opportunity, or else because of something operating upon the minds of their hearers to prevent them from giving due weight to the statements and arguments presented.

As the case proceeded, however, I found that the occasion was not so auspicious as it at first sight seemed.

That Dr. Briggs did not succeed in convincing the majority of the Assembly that his views were orthodox, it is unnecessary to say ; and it is equally true that his opponents did not succeed in convincing the whole Assembly that his views were at variance with the Westminster standards. More than one hundred of the commissioners held that his views were not at variance with any essential doctrine, nor in any respect such as to warrant his suspension from the office of the ministry. Many of the disinterested spectators were of the same opinion, and there appear to be thousands throughout the church whose minds are still in doubt.

CHAPTER II.

ATTITUDE OF DR. BRIGGS.

THAT Dr. Briggs did not succeed in persuading the Assembly to sustain the New York Presbytery's verdict of acquittal, was not due to any failure on his part to make the best use of his opportunity. From the first moment of his appearance in the court until near the close of the proceedings, when fatigue compelled him to withdraw, he was intent upon the case. He listened to the statements and arguments of his opponents hour after hour, occasionally checking seeming departures from the right line of procedure, with the earnestness of one who realized that his ecclesiastical life was at stake and that great principles were involved.

When it came his turn to speak, his appearance was a surprise to some who had formed their impressions of him from current rumor. Those who had formed the opinion that he was not a deeply conscientious man had to reverse that opinion. Those who had received the impression that he was not a thoroughly devout student of the Word of God had to dismiss that impression. They saw before them a man whose utterances and whole bearing commended

him to them as a Christian scholar, a reverent student of the Word of God, a devout seeker after truth. He had evidently spent much of his time among books, and students, and ideas, where he had his course of study and reasoning for the most part in his own hands, and it was, perhaps, partly on this account that he seemed to find it difficult to bear patiently at times with the opposition of those who seemed unable either to understand or accept his views.

It was evident that the opinions he held were not lightly entertained. They were based upon what he saw to be incontrovertible facts. They had been closely reasoned out in the light of Scripture and of the Westminster Confession and Catechisms. He claimed that while some of them were not directly taught in the Westminster standards, they were not contradictory of anything in those standards. They might be extra-confessional but were not contra-confessional. He frankly admitted having used the language of all the quotations that were made from his writings, but in some cases he strongly repudiated the meaning that had been put upon his words, and the inferences that were drawn from them. He was deeply stirred at the omission by the prosecution, and the overlooking by the court, of explanatory statements and qualifying phrases which seemed to him to be of vital importance; and from his point of view those statements and phrases were indeed vital. No disinterested observer could for a moment accuse him of anything like quibbling, or of not fairly meeting

each issue as it arose. To a stranger he appeared to be frank and candid in the highest degree. He seemed to be totally unacquainted with the arts by which some men seek to win favor, and outwit their opponents. He appeared to disregard the use that may be made of the tricks of oratory in appealing to a jury, and to rely solely on a plain statement of the facts of his position, and upon the lines of reasoning which had led him to the conclusions he had reached. His explanations of his positions seemed lucid and his logic accurate.

One of the most venerable of his opponents, the Rev. Dr. Duffield of Princeton, paid him the following tribute : —

“ Dr. Briggs undoubtedly is a man of rare scholarship, — a man who has received honors from European universities, and who deserves the respect and the kind treatment of his Christian brethren. And, if Dr. Briggs will pardon me for saying it, if Dr. Briggs’ logical faculty were equal to his scholarship, I know not his peer in the intellectual world, certainly of America.”

To a stranger the value of this high tribute was enhanced by the fact that it was exceedingly difficult to detect any flaw in his logic. He seemed almost too good a logician. He relied too much upon logical syllogisms, and made use of them in some instances, in his defence before the Assembly, when a less strictly intellectual process might have served his purpose better. I would say that he sometimes appeared to forget that “ those root truths upon which the founda-

tions of being rest are apprehended, not logically at all, but mystically ;” but I am forbidden by the recollection that some of his opponents accused him of mysticism. Nor can I appropriately quote here these other words of Principal Shairp : “ When once awakened the spiritual faculty far outgoes all systems, scientific, philosophical, or theological, and apprehends and lives by truths which these cannot reduce to system.” These words would be inappropriate inasmuch as the spiritual faculty in the case of Dr. Briggs was evidently far from being dormant. It was normally awake and keenly sensitive. His intimate friends testified to the earnestness and sincerity of his Christian life, and his opponents joined them in this testimony. They never once charged him with insincerity, nor as much as hinted that his heart was not right toward God. From all that he himself said, either incidentally or directly, regarding God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, it was manifest that he was a devout believer in the doctrine of the Holy Trinity. It was equally evident that he was an ardent lover of the Lord Jesus, and held firmly to the great doctrine of the Atonement. (He did not parade his piety, it is true, yet it was apparent to all who saw and heard him for the first time that he was what his friends and opponents alike declared him to be, not only a great scholar but a good man.) After carefully observing his attitude of mind, and listening attentively to all his utterances in his defence, I was not surprised when told privately that in matters of morals “ he is a Puritan of the Puritans.”

Hearing such testimony borne regarding the accused, and observing that this testimony was confirmed by all his utterances and his whole bearing, it was scarcely possible for a disinterested stranger to help wishing in the early stages of the proceedings, that the trial should not go on, but that the request of Dr. Briggs and his friends should be complied with, and the case be allowed to take the usual course and be first dealt with by the court of next higher jurisdiction after the Presbytery, the Synod of New York.

The attitude of Dr. Briggs may perhaps be best set forth by the following quotations from the close of his two main arguments before the Assembly. In closing his five hours' argument upon the question of procedure, he spoke as follows:—

“Mr. Moderator and brethren, the appellant in the opening argument, as I have already intimated, entered into the merits of the appeal. I shall not attempt to go into that merit myself except so far as to make an explicit denial of his statement, when he charges me with teaching doctrines which are fundamental errors. I deny that I have ever taught any doctrines that are fundamental errors, and my presbytery has acquitted me, brethren, of teaching any fundamental errors.”

Then, with uplifted hand, Dr. Briggs solemnly uttered the following words:—

“I affirm before this body that I believe the Holy Scriptures to be the Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice, according to the vow that I assumed at my ordination, and which I have assumed every three

years, according to the rule of the Union Theological Seminary. I affirm that I hold to the whole doctrine taught in the first chapter of the Westminster Confession relating to Holy Scripture, without any qualification or reservation whatever.

“I beg leave to affirm that I hold to the entire system of doctrine set forth in the Westminster Confession, and anything that I may have said that at all conflicts with this statement is due to the misinterpretations which have been put upon the language which I have uttered. I will not say that these misinterpretations are always intentional. I shall not exonerate myself from some possible blame in lack of clearness in the enunciation of them. But I beg leave to affirm the truth that I have made no statement that at all conflicts with the affirmations that I have made before you.

“And now, brethren, in all honesty between us as brethren, ought not this case to cease? Send it to the Synod of New York,—and I call in all honesty and friendliness upon the appellants to unite with me in that procedure,—and I promise them in your presence that if they will go with me to the Synod of New York, where the whole case can be considered by that Synod, in the most friendly and courteous manner, I will aid in a full solution of all the matters in dispute. That is all I have to say. If I have said anything that at all injures the feelings of any member of this court, I very much regret it. If I have said anything in my inaugural that has disturbed the peace of the church or caused any doubt or uncertainty or affliction to even the feeblest of God’s children, I regret it more than any one else can do.

“I have been a teacher of the Bible in the Union Theological Seminary for twenty years. There are only

four professors now teaching in your theological seminaries that have been in service longer than I have. There are only two of them that have taught more ministers now in the service than I have. I challenge the production of a single one of these ministers that have been under my instruction during the past twenty years who can say that anything that I have taught him has undermined or diminished his faith in the divine authority of Holy Scripture or his love for the Word of God."

It was not surprising that at the close of this earnest appeal the court should, for the moment, have forgotten the moderator's charge and given way to a burst of applause. Yet the appeal was in vain. The Assembly by an overwhelming majority, 409 to 145, decided not to remit the case to the synod, but to put Dr. Briggs on trial at once. When the merits of the case were considered, he closed his seven hours' argument in his defence with the following words:

"Now, Mr. Moderator and brethren, I have endeavored to set before you as clearly and thoroughly as I could what are my views on the subjects in dispute. I hold these views sincerely and with all my heart. I hold that they are the views that are set forth in Holy Scripture. The larger portion of them are set forth also in the Westminster Confession of Faith, and as I know from a study of the Westminster divines for many years, would be regarded by them as very important matters of the Puritan faith of the seventeenth century.

"There are other matters in dispute which have arisen in the public mind since the times of the Westminster Assembly, and have received no definition in our stand-

ards. Now, you must judge upon these matters as judges in the presence of Jesus Christ, and before the living God, and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. I challenge you before God that you judge righteous judgment. I challenge you before God that you judge me according to the record of the declarations I have made. I challenge you before Jesus Christ that you do no wrong to the Church of the living God.”

CHAPTER III.

ATTITUDE OF THE ASSEMBLY.

THE General Assembly that convened at Washington, D. C., on the 18th May, 1893, was a typical Presbyterian Supreme Court. Seldom have over five hundred and fifty men of equal intelligence been seen gathered together as one body. Coming from all parts of the great American Republic, and from the church's mission fields in China, India, South America and elsewhere, all the commissioners, clerical and lay alike, seemed from the first to be possessed of a spirit of calmness which betokened that they felt there was grave business on hand. The exceptions to this state of calm reserve were so rare as to be very noticeable when they did occur.

Some minds were so overburdened with a sense of the importance of the great issue before them that they could not refrain from giving vent to their feelings as soon as an opportunity was afforded them of addressing their brethren. The retiring moderator was the first to relieve his mind in this way. His opening sermon was of the nature of an earnest argument in advance against the supposed heresies the Assembly when constituted was expected to deal with. That the calmness on the surface of the assembly had

a great depth of strong feeling underneath it was made manifest by the applause that unexpectedly burst forth in the sacred gathering when the preacher gave utterance to sentiments that most directly antagonized the alleged heresies.

This burst of feeling over, the commissioners settled back into their former attitude of calm reserve. Observing their decorum throughout the prolonged discussions, one was sometimes at a loss to understand the secret of their marked calmness. Was it a conscientious sense of the gravity of the occasion? Or was it simply coolness, such as is ordinarily characteristic of the American people? Were many of the commissioners still undecided as to what their final action should be, and were they holding their judgment in abeyance until the arguments were in? Or did the majority of the assembly feel that they had been sent to Washington to discharge an unpleasant duty, and must discharge it whatever arguments to the contrary might be presented? Did they feel that they were so strong that they could afford to be silent and allow the opposing minority the utmost latitude until the time of voting should come? Probably no one of these suppositions, nor all of them taken together, would fully account for the quiet reserve that was manifest. To a disinterested observer the considerations that seemed to have chief weight were these: The impression prevailed throughout the length and breadth of the church that Dr. Briggs entertained and taught heretical views upon several doctrines which the Presbyterian Church has always regarded as vital;

the commissioners sent to the assembly were expected to set the mind of the church at rest by condemning those alleged heresies; if they failed to do this, then the impression would go abroad that the Presbyterian Church had drifted away from her old moorings; if they sent the case to the Synod of New York, they would be accused of having failed to discharge the duty assigned them; and as for their failing to find Dr. Briggs guilty of the heresies charged against him, this would be out of the question, inasmuch as the majority of the membership of the church believed that, through the columns of the religious and secular press, they were already in possession of all the evidence that was needed in order to condemn him. Under such circumstances what could the assembly do, in the interests of the peace of the church and the cause of truth, but the thing which the great majority of the church believed to be the only thing that could properly be done? It might be said that they should have braved the opinions of the many who would have been disappointed by such a mode of procedure, and remitted the case to the Synod of New York, in the hope that both the peace of the church and the interests of truth in general would eventually be better conserved in this way; but in the discretion of the Assembly it was not deemed expedient to pursue this course; and what more need be said? The discretion of a court is not subject to review. It would be ungenerous to say that their discretion may have been governed by circumstances outside the court, or to say that the members of the prosecuting com-

mittee were far from being alone in wishing to have the case settled at that Assembly, and settled in favor of their appeal. To say this might be equal to imputing not very creditable motives to a body of Christian men who were without doubt honorable and conscientious.

I am aware that there are those who think that all the above considerations should be ruled out, and that it should simply be said that the case of Dr. Briggs was decided solely in accordance with the evidence and arguments presented before the court. There are no doubt thousands who believe this. Far be it from me to say that those who voted for the condemnation and suspension of Dr. Briggs did not believe they were voting in as close accord as possible with the evidence and arguments presented. I sincerely believe the very opposite of this. But I also believe that it was impossible for the court to be properly seized of all the explanations made and all the arguments and evidence presented. The evidence was simply voluminous. It consisted of printed volumes, and sections and sentences of volumes, which it would have taken the most skilled of scholars days, if not weeks, to examine under the most favorable circumstances. Think of the following as submitted in evidence by Col. J. J. McCook on behalf of the Prosecuting Committee, here called the appellant:—

“Upon pages 86, 88, and 89 of the printed document in the hands of the commissioners will be found reference to the evidence introduced by the appellant. On pages

89, 90, 91, 92, and 93 will be found reference to the evidence introduced by the appellee, all of which, having been received as competent evidence by the lower court, may be used by the parties in the argument of this appeal.

“When sitting as a judicatory in a judicial case, the members of the court are charged with judicial knowledge of the contents of the constitution of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, consisting of the Confession of Faith, the larger and shorter Catechisms, the Form of Government, the Book of Discipline, and Directory of Worship, a copy of which was introduced in evidence by the appellant, marked F.

“The members of the court are also charged with judicial knowledge of the contents of the Holy Bible, a copy of which was introduced in evidence by the appellant, marked G, and any portions of the Holy Bible and the constitution of the church may be referred to by the appellant, without any previous designation of the part or parts thereof to be used.

“The minutes of the General Assembly being a public document and an official record of the church, the court must also take judicial knowledge of the contents thereof, and the appellant proposes to use portions of pages 57 and 235 of the minutes of the General Assembly of 1892.

“Use will also be made, as a part of the record in this case, of portions of the original charges and specifications in this case presented to the Presbytery of New York on the 5th day of October, 1891, or of all or any part of the amended charges and specifications (found at pages 44 to 75 of the printed document) presented to the Presbytery of New York on the 9th day of November, 1892, including

the quotations from the inaugural address, and the citations of proof from Scripture, the Confession of Faith, and the larger and shorter Catechisms.

“The appellant will also use the judgment, the notice of appeal, the appeal, and the specifications of errors alleged, which have already been read, and will be found at pages 3 to 34 (inclusive) in the printed document.

“The appellant will also use the following pages, or parts thereof, of the minutes of the Presbytery of New York: vol. xiv., pages 227, 228, 265, 276, 285, 286, 291, 292, 294, 303–305, 310, 313, 319, 355, 356, 361, 378, 384, 385, 395, 396, 397, and 500 *et seq.* We don’t propose to read those pages. This is for the identification of the matter. We propose to read them if we care to, but we don’t propose to read them as a whole. It is simply for notice to the appellee of such portions of the record as we wish to use.

“The appellant will also use the following pages or parts thereof of the stenographic report of the trial in the Presbytery of New York from Nov. 9, 1892, to Jan. 9, 1893, as follows: pages 121, 122, 123, 148, 187, 188, 405, 411, 451 *et seq.*, 470–472, 475, 476, 477, 478, 784, 900, 993, 1009, 1010, 1028, 1029, 1035, 1036–1038, 1153, 1174, 1210, 1212, 1214, 1225, 1228, 1341, 1343–1351.

“The appellant will also use the Preface to the Inaugural Address, third edition, with the appendix thereto, and the whole or parts of the following pages thereof: 25, 26, 27, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 41, 53, 55, 58, 89, 103, 104, 105, 106, 107, 147; Dr. Briggs’ work, ‘Whither,’ pages 11, 211, and 221; Dr. Briggs’ ‘Biblical Study,’ pages 161 and 243; Dr. Briggs’ ‘Who Wrote the Pentateuch?’ or parts thereof, as follows: pages 23, 25, 28, 29, 75, 79, 101, 106, 124, 157, 158, 159, and 162; Dr. Briggs’

‘Who Wrote Isaiah?’ pages 135, 137, and 138; Dr. Briggs’ article in the ‘Presbyterian Review’ for April, 1884, page 384.

“The appellant will also use in its argument portions of pages 1 and 4 of Newman’s ‘Apologia pro Vita Sua,’ in the volume submitted in evidence by the appellant marked D.

“The appellant will also use portions of book i. chapters i. and ii., book ii. chapter ii., and book iv. chapter ii., of Martineau’s ‘Seat of Authority in Religion,’ in the volume introduced in evidence by the appellant marked E; ‘Andover Review,’ vol. xiii. page 59; Kuenen’s ‘Prophets and Prophecies in Israel’ (1877), pages 443–449.

“I shall not take the time of the court to read any of these citations at this time; but they may be read, and will be referred to from time to time during the argument. In this way the appellant hopes and expects to use but little more than one-half of the time assigned to it. Dr. Lampe will now present the appellant’s opening argument.”

Note also the following statements by Dr. Briggs, as indicating the vastness of the mass of evidence which it was necessary for the court to consider, in order to have an intelligent acquaintance with his position.

“I wish to make a few preliminary statements for the information of the house, and the gentlemen of the press, and the stenographer.

“First, I waive the reading of the records, although I feel very deeply that the records contain my defence in its fulness, including the printed document called the defence, also the volume entitled the ‘Higher Criticism of

the Hexateuch,' which is a part of the defence, and the volume on 'The Bible, the Church, and the Reason,' which was submitted to the Presbytery of New York as a part of the evidence, and also all of the evidence which I submitted to the Presbytery of New York in the trial. But the reading of all that defence and all that evidence would consume a great many hours, and I have taken it for granted that this defence and the evidence having been sent by mail to every commissioner of this assembly, I might take it for granted that as honorable men they had read it, and it would only be necessary for me in argument to call attention to what I regarded as the essential parts thereof.

"Second, I have endeavored to save the time of the house as far as possible in my argument. Therefore I have gone over it and I have cut it up and readjusted so many parts of it as that I can answer the question of the stated clerk that not even the copy which is in my hands can really be relied upon as giving to the stenographer the argument which I am now to make. Because it is necessary, under the peculiar circumstances in which I am now placed, to make some portions of my argument purely extempore.

"Let me say, in the third place, that there are so many of these specifications of error which concern purely the Presbytery of New York, that I feel it is a serious burden that it should be laid upon me to defend the presbytery. I wish that the commissioners of the presbytery had more time to defend the presbytery with reference to these matters."

In addition to all this, Dr. Briggs found it necessary to bring a number of volumes before the court,

from some of which lengthy extracts were read in his defence, and one of which he was so questioned regarding that he said that in order to answer fully, he would require to read the whole chapter referred to, and offered to lend the volume to his questioner.

Besides all this, the minds of the commissioners were further distracted, by the multiplicity of technically arranged matters, which all required separate consideration,—such as the first ground of appeal with twelve specifications under it; the second ground of appeal with its three specifications; the third ground of appeal with its two specifications; the fourth ground of appeal with its six specifications; the fifth ground of appeal with its eleven specifications.

After days had been spent in considering all these matters *seriatim* which required the commissioners to give close attention, forenoon, afternoon, and evening, to addresses ranging from three to five hours in length, then came the consideration of the original and amended charges, extending over a still longer number of days, and requiring the attention of the commissioners, forenoon, afternoon, and evening, to addresses ranging from four to seven hours in length. No wonder that at one stage of the proceedings, when Dr. Briggs was presenting some of his most important evidence, a commissioner should have moved that the Assembly take an extended recess, as about half a dozen commissioners near him were fast asleep.

So complex and comprehensive was the matter to be considered, so voluminous was the evidence, and

so extended was the argument, that it was simply impossible for the vast majority of the commissioners to follow the case closely and give due weight to all the statements and explanations made. Had there been time in the intervals between sessions to read the evidence as it appeared from day to day in the official report of the Assembly, it might have been otherwise, or had the commissioners been in possession of the volumes referred to in evidence, but even this was not the case. Strange as it may seem, though all the charges against Dr. Briggs were based upon his inaugural address, not a copy of that address was to be found in the Assembly. A commissioner proposed to have copies of it introduced, that the quotations might be read in their connection, but the Assembly paid no heed to the proposal. The commissioners probably felt that they had enough to perplex them in the documents already in their hands, and in the long and elaborate addresses to which they must try to listen, and that the original and fundamental document would only add to their perplexity. It was evident that in undertaking to investigate all the important doctrinal statements and principles before them, in a thoroughly satisfactory manner, in the few days at their disposal, they had undertaken an impossible task. They might go through the forms of a judicial investigation with all possible patience, but they could not attain the true ends of such an investigation.

It must be admitted that all this operated to the disadvantage of Dr. Briggs. The charges that had

been made against him were simple, strong, and easily remembered. The newspaper articles and popular rumors respecting those charges, and his alleged heresy in general, had impressed the charges deeply upon the minds of all; and unless, in his defence, he could succeed in effacing that impression by what he had the opportunity of saying only once and that to a wearied audience, the impression would remain. So numerous were the points to be discussed, and the statements to be refuted, that long before the defendant had finished his argument the explanations he had made in the early part of his defence, which occupied days, must have been obscured if not effaced by the consideration of other matters of a different doctrinal nature. Dr. Briggs himself saw this danger, and at the opening of his defence sought to guard the Assembly against it as follows:—

“The peril of the situation is this, brethren,—I ask you to guard yourselves against it as judges of this court,—that when it comes to a vote and you are weary with the long discussion of the parties, and the debate, you shall not rush on without thought, and sustain one specification after another without giving it the due consideration that it requires.”

It was significant that when the vote was taken all of the thirty-four specifications were sustained except two, and that these two, containing a charge of prejudice against certain well-known members of the New York Presbytery, were easily understood and remembered, and from their personal character had made an

indelible impression upon the minds of the commissioners. Another specification of a similar nature was sustained by a majority of only two votes, and any one listening to the discussion could easily understand why it was not rejected along with the other two.

The whole vote to sustain the appeal against the acquittal of Dr. Briggs stood as follows: Total number of votes cast, 499; to sustain, 298; to sustain in part, 85; not to sustain, 116.

The remarkable majority against Dr. Briggs was owing largely, if not wholly, to the difficulty commissioners must have found in retaining and weighing the arguments and evidence presented. Judging as a disinterested observer, the majority of the assembly never properly apprehended Dr. Briggs' position. They never succeeded in looking at the matters in dispute from his point of view. Hence, what was plain truth to him was distorted truth to them. They could not reconcile his statements with his claim to being an orthodox teacher. How he could make the strong assertions of loyalty to the standards of the church, and hold the views he seemed to them to hold, appeared to be an enigma to them.

The great difference between the majority and the minority in the Assembly was not a difference of scholarship, nor of intellectual ability, nor of soundness in the faith, nor of fair-mindedness; it consisted in this, that the minority saw the matters in dispute from Dr. Briggs' point of view, while the majority did not. To a disinterested onlooker this was clear. The majority condemned Dr. Briggs for his views as

they interpreted them, and not as he interpreted them and as they really were. According to their understanding of them, Dr. Briggs' teachings were at variance with the Scriptures and the standards of the church. According to his own understanding of them they were not at variance with either. It is not the first time that equally honest and equally devout lovers of the same truth have misunderstood one another. Whether this misunderstanding was the fault of Dr. Briggs or the majority, or both, or neither, need not be discussed, but that it was a fact will appear from a calm review of the merits of the case.

CHAPTER IV.

ATTITUDE OF "A STRANGER."

BORN of Scottish Presbyterian parents, early instructed in the Bible and the Westminster "Shorter Catechism" after the old-time Scottish fashion; specially instructed in the standards of the Presbyterian Church by a thoroughly evangelical and orthodox Scotch minister; subsequently instructed in theology by the late venerable Dr. Charles Hodge and his associates during a three years' course at Princeton Theological Seminary; for more than twenty years a city pastor, ministering to people of undoubted intelligence and orthodoxy; for the past quarter of a century a reader of that witness for orthodoxy THE PRESBYTERIAN,— I found myself on the 18th of May last, in the ordering of Providence, and without any pre-arrangement of mine, a visitor at the Washington Assembly.

As already intimated, I had formed no definite opinion as to the merits of the Briggs case, and had taken no side upon the questions at issue, though my reading on the subject had tended to incline me toward an unfavorable judgment of Dr. Briggs' views.

I found myself ready to listen impartially to both sides, and was curious to know how the evidence and arguments would impress me.

It was interesting to me to find that Dr. Briggs and his friends seemed to me to have quite the best of the argument upon the question as to whether the case should be tried there and then, or sent to the Synod of New York. But my conviction that the majority had acted in accordance with their best discretion in deciding to try the case without delay kept me still in sympathy with them. It must be acknowledged that my desire to hear the merits of the case discussed also helped to reconcile me to the fact that my judgment had not been the judgment of the majority. When the merits of the case came up for discussion I gave close attention to the carefully prepared argument of Dr. Lampe on behalf of the prosecuting committee, but was surprised to find that I could not agree with many of the statements it contained. While, in some instances, by quotations from Dr. Briggs' writings, it appeared to show that Dr. Briggs was out of accord with the Presbyterian standards, in other cases it seemed to fail to grasp and meet his views. The Scripture passages cited and the application made of them seemed to lack pertinency. All that the passages taught could be true, and the views they were cited to disprove could also be true. There were not a few examples of this kind of irrelevancy and inconclusiveness in quotations, both from the Bible and the Westminster divines. There were also positions taken which were obviously contrary to the Presbyterian standards, as may be seen in the following pages.

Then I discovered that Dr. Lampe was far more

"orthodox" than I had been trained to be at Princeton, or than I had become after over twenty years of study along the lines on which I entered during my seminary course. I saw that his ideas of the Church and the reason as channels of divine authority were far from being mine, that his "views of the doctrine of inspiration" and the inerrancy of Scripture were not in accord with the special teachings of two of my Princeton professors, and that his statements and reasoning regarding the authorship of the Pentateuch were directly opposed to the published views of another of my Princeton professors, as will appear when the several charges against Dr. Briggs are passed under review.

On the other hand, in listening to Dr. Briggs in his defence of his views, I was impressed with the clearness of his statements and the directness with which he met every charge. His appeals to both the Word of God and the Westminster standards seemed pertinent; his reasoning plain and his arguments conclusive. In the light of his exposition of his inaugural, its meaning and intent as a loyal contribution toward a right understanding of the authority of Holy Scripture and the relations of the Church and the reason became apparent. Even the statements the inaugural contained which at first view had seemed decidedly objectionable were almost entirely relieved of their offensiveness.

But what interested me most was the remarkable agreement of the views of Dr. Briggs, upon several of the doctrines on which he had been arraigned, with the views I had been taught at Princeton, and which I had taught freely to intelligent and orthodox congregations for more than twenty years.

My conviction was that the Assembly could not possibly condemn Dr. Briggs for holding those views; that if they did they would condemn many of the most esteemed and orthodox ministers, living and dead, of the American church, not to speak of ministers equally loyal to the truth in the church to which I have the honor to belong, and in other branches of the great Presbyterian Church throughout the world.

This impression was deepened as I listened to the closing argument of Colonel McCook, in which he did not attempt to refute the statements and arguments of Dr. Briggs, but contented himself mainly with reiterating statements which to an unbiassed onlooker, the address of Dr. Briggs had wholly disproved. In any particular in which Colonel McCook did reargue the case, his reasoning seemed strangely fallacious. Take the following as an example. Dr. Briggs had been charged with heresy for having used certain words which appeared to teach heresy. In his defence he showed that a wrong construction had been put upon his words and explained their real meaning, and the sense in which they were used. Other words of his which he acknowledged had been correctly understood, he showed did not teach any doctrine contrary to the Westminster standards. In his reply Colonel McCook reasoned as follows:—

“When the sufficiency in form and legal effect of the charges and specifications is sustained, it has been decided that if the accused uttered the words found in the specifications, he is guilty of an offence. Otherwise he would not be put on his defence.”

It was plain that Colonel McCook had quite mistaken the meaning of sustaining the "sufficiency in form and legal effect" of charges and specifications; he regarded it as equivalent to sustaining the charges and specifications themselves. He accordingly reasoned as follows: —

"What then remained for the Prosecuting Committee to prove? Simply that the accused had written such and such words. The merits of the case refer simply to the question of fact. But the fact was admitted by the accused that he had written the words quoted in the specifications. The proof was complete. The verdict (of the Presbytery of New York) should have been guilty, and the charges and specifications should have been sustained. The case on its merits is a jury case. It is a question of fact not of law. The peculiarity of the case before you is that the utterances of the accused relied upon by the prosecuting committee to sustain the charges have all been admitted by him. Did he utter them or not? That was the question on its merits. There was no question of fact but that. The facts were admitted and the only course left to the court was to bring in a verdict of guilty."

I was impressed at once with the strangeness of these statements by Colonel McCook, and with the remarkable confirmation they furnished of the impression I had reluctantly received from all the preceding arguments of the prosecution, namely, that they were calculated to "make a man an offender for a word," — to condemn him for his language, not as he understood it and intended it to be understood by others, but as the prosecution saw fit to interpret it, — to

condemn him upon the accusation simply, and not upon the evidence.

From this time onward I found myself no longer neutral as an onlooker. I was, both by conviction as to the merits of the case, and from a sense of fairness, on the side of the accused.

This may possibly have had some influence upon my opinion of the views and arguments subsequently presented by members of the court. Be this as it may, those who spoke as representing the views of the minority appeared to see the case from the same point of view with myself, and to reason correctly, while the representatives of the majority seemed to view it from a wholly different standpoint and to reason accordingly.

Having had an opportunity, since the close of the Assembly, of reviewing at leisure the official report of the Assembly with other necessary documents, I have found that the impressions formed during the trial were not only correct, but that they have been much deepened by a careful perusal of all the arguments and evidence presented before the court: and I cannot but believe that, upon a calm review of the whole case, in a similar way, all thoughtful and unprejudiced persons would be convinced that in condemning and suspending the Rev. Professor Briggs, the Washington Assembly inadvertently committed a grave mistake, — a mistake which some who voted with the majority will soon be ready to acknowledge, and which the great American Presbyterian Church will not allow to remain long uncorrected.

CHAPTER V.

FIRST CHARGE: THE REASON A FOUNTAIN OF DIVINE
AUTHORITY.

THE first charge preferred against Dr. Briggs was, that he taught, "that the reason is a fountain of divine authority which may and does savingly enlighten men, even such men as reject the Scriptures as the authoritative proclamation of the Will of God, and reject also the way of salvation through the mediation and sacrifice of the Son of God as revealed therein." This is a statement of Dr. Briggs' alleged teaching made by the prosecuting committee. He never made such a statement himself. He repudiated the above statement as being wholly wrong. What he said in his inaugural was that "there are historically three great fountains of divine authority, the Bible, the Church, and the Reason." From this statement of fact on the part of Dr. Briggs, and from arguments and illustrations connected with it in his inaugural, the prosecuting committee framed the above charge. Dr. Lampe on behalf of the prosecuting committee opened his argument in support of this charge with the following assertion, which notwithstanding his knowledge of Dr. Briggs' disavowal of it, he regarded as a valid inference: —

“The Bible, the Church, and the Reason, then, are equal in being great fountains of divine authority. The quality of divinity and the right of divine authority belong alike to all three ; as such each can be to man an infallible guide of life, and speak to him with eternal and immutable certainty, so that he can yield to each implicit obedience, rest on each with loving certainty, and build with joyous confidence.”

This is, at the outset, a remarkable distortion of the views of Dr. Briggs, arising from a refusal to accept his explanation of the meaning of a single word, and a consequent failure to understand the scope of his argument.

Dr. Briggs never said, and does not hold that the Bible, the Church, and the Reason are equal. He strongly maintains the very reverse of this. Over and over, again and again, in language as clear and explicit as a man could use, has he denied this equality of the Bible, the Church, and the Reason. He has repeatedly denied it in his published writings, and he denied it again and again on the floor of the General Assembly. When he found that his language in the inaugural had been misunderstood he hastened to correct this misunderstanding in the appendix to the second edition of the inaugural in these words : —

“I did not say, and I did not give any one the right to infer from anything whatever in the inaugural address or in any of my writings that I co-ordinated the Bible, the Church, and the Reason.”

He denied this misstatement of his teaching again in his lectures on the Bible, the Church, and the Reason, in which he states directly that he has known of no one who "has made Bible, Church, and Reason co-ordinate, that is, on the same level, in the same order of equal independent authority." He uttered these sentiments on the floor of the Assembly with all the earnestness he could command. How, in the face of all these statements and explanations, the prosecuting committee could adhere to their statement to the contrary, it is difficult to understand. It seems to be accounted for in this way: they regarded their own inferences which they drew from the language of Dr. Briggs as more trustworthy than Dr. Briggs' own understanding of his language.

The same thing may be true of the next misstatement in this opening utterance of Dr. Lampe; namely, that "each [of the three, the Bible, the Church, and the Reason] can be to man an infallible guide of life." In his very next sentence Dr. Lampe admits that Dr. Briggs does not hold that the three are equal, or that each of them is an infallible guide. He discloses the fact that this is simply his own inference from Dr. Briggs' language. He says: "It does not in the least relieve the matter to say that the Bible differs from the other two fountains of divine authority in being in addition also an infallible rule of faith and practice."

The following quotation from Dr. Briggs' argument gives in a word his true position with respect to the Bible and the Reason:—

“Holy Scripture is that in which the Holy Spirit speaks, and He speaks bearing witness by and with the Word in the heart of the believer. The Holy Spirit speaks to the reason of the godly man through Holy Scripture, and gives him the ultimate decision in all matters of faith and practice. I never taught any other doctrine. If any one thinks that this doctrine conflicts with the doctrine that the reason is a great fountain of divine authority, he thinks wrongly and is apart from the true lines of logical reasoning. The Confession does not here say that the Holy Spirit does not speak in the reason apart from Holy Scripture, and, so speaking, speak with divine authority. It is that the Holy Spirit is the Supreme Judge. He is the Supreme Judge wherever, whenever, and in whatever form He speaks. The Confession is only concerned to teach that it is when speaking in the Holy Scriptures that He is the Supreme Judge, and that when so speaking the Church must yield allegiance, whatever may have been the decrees of councils or opinions of ancient writers, and that private spirits must obey, whatever the doctrine of men may have been; in other words, that *Church and Reason must yield to the Supreme Judge, the Holy Spirit, when speaking in Holy Scripture*. I have not said that the Holy Spirit speaks the final word in the reason, to which the Church and the Bible must yield. I have not exalted the reason over the Bible. I am no rationalist.

“It is the teaching of the Confession to which I subscribe that the Holy Spirit, when He speaks the infallible word in Holy Scripture, always speaks through the Scriptures to the reason, and by His inward work in the heart, in the reason, gives certainty, assurance, and infallible conviction of the truth and grace of God.

There is no conflict between reason and Scripture in such a sense. There can be none. The Holy Spirit unites them in an infallible bond of certainty."

It might be thought that, in view of this explanation by Dr. Briggs, the Prosecuting Committee would cease to contend that he teaches that the reason is a fountain of divine authority on an equality with the Bible, and admit that he teaches that reason must bow to Holy Scripture as the voice of the Spirit. Yet the prosecution adhere to their contention. They go farther, and deny that the reason can be a fountain of divine authority in any sense. In the face of all the explanations made by Dr. Briggs, they mistake the meaning of the word "fountain." They evidently think it an original source, which a fountain never is. There is always a great source of supply back of a fountain, by which it is fed. It is really only a channel between the original source and the outside world. It is in this sense that Dr. Briggs uses the word "fountain," as he repeatedly explained to the Assembly. He said: "I do not mean that there is any original divine authority in the human reason, or that there is any original divine authority in the Christian Church, but simply that they are channels, fountains, media, through which God's Holy Spirit speaks to men." At another time, in answer to a request he had made that if any one had any question to ask he would send it up in writing, he received another question regarding his use of the word "fountain;" in answering

which, before resuming his argument after recess, he said:—

“I have just received a question in regard to the matter I have passed over, which, in accordance with my promise, I will first answer.

“‘Would you kindly give me your interpretation of the word *fountain* as you use it, and oblige?’

“I thought I had done this, but it seems exceedingly difficult to make my meaning plain. I use ‘fountain’ not in the sense of the original source; because, as I have said, God alone is the original source. But I use ‘fountain’ in the figurative sense, as that out of which the waters flow, synonymous with ‘channel’ and ‘medium.’ God is the only original source. The Bible, the Church, and the Reason are channels, means of grace, by which God communicates His Divine authority to men. I hope I have made myself plain.”

On what ground the prosecution refused to accept these explanations, it is difficult to understand.

The Prosecuting Committee make another mistake in the use of words. They seem to regard the Bible as an original *source*, an infallible *source*, instead of an infallible *fountain* issuing forth from God, the great Source of all light and life. Dr. Briggs called attention to this mistake, in his defence before the Assembly, as follows:—

“It seems to me that Dr. Lampe and most of my critics make the serious mistake of confounding the Original *Source* of all authority with the *fountain* of authority. It seems to me that the prosecution make the Bible the infallible source of authority, instead of [regarding God

as] speaking through the Bible, as I do; and therefore they do not understand my position when I say that the Reason and the Church are fountains of divine authority."

Mistaking the meaning of the figurative term "fountain," the Prosecuting Committee have been unable to understand how Dr. Briggs could hold that the Church and the Reason can be fountains of authority without being at the same time infallible *guides*, — rules of faith and practice like the Bible. Yet they should have had no such difficulty. They should have understood that the Bible is a great fountain of divine authority, — the medium through which God speaks to man; and that as such a medium it contains within itself all that God has to say to mankind for their guidance; and that the Church and the Reason are great fountains of divine authority, — media through which God's Spirit speaks to man, without containing within them all, or anything approaching to all that God has to say to mankind for their guidance.

So mistaking the use Dr. Briggs makes of the figurative term "fountain" as applied to the reason, the Prosecuting Committee argue against the idea that the reason can be a fountain of authority at all. But a glance at their reasoning shows that they are arguing against the doctrine that the reason is a *source* of divine authority, and not simply a *channel*. If not they are themselves guilty of heresy, as Dr. Briggs has shown with great clearness. He shows that the Confession distinctly recognizes the reason as a great

fountain of divine authority. "The prosecution," he says, —

"shut their eyes to seven chapters of the Confession — 10, 13, 14, 16, 18, 20, and 26 — when they represent that my doctrine of the reason is erroneous. In their original charges they state that I 'strike at the vitals of religion' in teaching that the reason is a great fountain of divine authority. I do indeed strike at the vitals of religion, but in a sense quite different from that in their minds; for this doctrine so strikes at the vitals of religion that there can be no vital religion without it."

By means of argument based upon the Bible, the Confession, and the most sacred experiences of God's children, Dr. Briggs makes it plain that the reason is a necessary medium through which God speaks to man. But his argument is all lost upon his opponents, for their minds are full of a different idea, — namely, the idea that the reason is not of itself a *source* of divine authority.

But Dr. Briggs, having announced the simple truth that the Spirit of God can and does speak to men through their reason, including their consciences and whole moral natures, and having shown that it is through the reason, in this broad sense, that the Spirit applies the Word of God savingly to the hearts and lives of men, goes further, and mentions that where there is no knowledge of the Word of God, nor access to it, as in the case of the heathen, the Spirit of God can speak authoritatively to the human soul through the reason as it is exercised in consider-

ing such revelations of God as are within its reach. When the orthodoxy of this position is challenged by his opponents, — and surely it is strange that it should have been challenged, — Dr. Briggs feels called upon to defend it, and in doing so appeals to the inspired Word as follows : —

“ We appeal to the statement of Holy Scripture respecting those outside the visible Kingdom of God, and therefore excluded from contact with Holy Scripture and Church. What shall we say to the teaching of Paul ? ‘ And He made of one every nation of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed seasons, and the bounds of their habitation; that they should seek God, if haply they might feel after Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; for in Him we live and move and have our being; as certain even of your own poets have said, For we are also His offspring.’ Do none of these offspring of God among the heathen feel after Him ? Do those who feel fail to find Him ? Do none of those the root of whose being is God look to the root and become conscious of that fountain of life springing up within them ? Or are these words of Paul a fancy incapable of realization, a dream which finds no counterpart in the real heathen man ?

“ What of the preaching of Peter ? ‘ Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons, but in every nation he that feareth Him and worketh righteousness is acceptable to Him.’ Are there no God-fearing men among the nations who hold to the ethnic religions ? Are there none who give alms and work righteousness ? Was Peter mistaken ? Does God really respect persons, and reject a man because he was not born a Hebrew or because he was not

educated in Christian lands? Was Cornelius the only illustration of this profound utterance? And was he accepted simply because he might have been a proselyte?

“What of the preaching of Jesus? ‘The men of Nineveh shall stand up in the judgment with this generation and shall condemn it because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and behold, a greater than Jonah is here. The queen of the South shall rise up in the judgment with this generation and shall condemn it; for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and behold, a greater than Solomon is here.’ If the proud Assyrians, the inhabitants of Nineveh, were not excluded from repentance because they had no Bible and were hostile to the kingdom of Israel, why should the inhabitants of any other metropolis of the ethnic religions be excluded if they repent according to the teaching they have? Is the Oriental queen the only potentate who has found God by wisdom outside the kingdom? True, the one heard the preaching of Jonah, and the other the wisdom of Solomon. But there is no evidence that either of them accepted Holy Scripture, or united with Holy Church.”

At another stage of his argument Dr. Briggs quoted from the Confession, in support of his position, the words, —

“Although the light of nature and the works of creation and Providence do so far manifest the greatness and power of God as to leave man inexcusable,” and added: “Listen to Holy Scripture: ‘For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these not having the law are a law unto themselves, which show the works of the law written in their hearts,

their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another.' ”

He also referred to Romans i. 19-20 : —

“ Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them ; for God hath showed it unto them. For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead ; so that they are without excuse.”

The Prosecuting Committee utterly failed to meet Dr. Briggs here. They said several things as if in reply ; but their statements are so indefinite and conflicting that it is difficult, if not impossible, to determine with any degree of certainty whether they accept Dr. Briggs' reasoning and the teaching of Scripture regarding the possibility of individuals among the heathen being saved by the Spirit working through their reason, or whether they reject this doctrine. The substance of what they say in reply, through Dr. Lampe, is contained in the following non-committal and mutually contradictory sentences :

“ That Dr. Briggs conceives of each of these fountains of divine authority as capable of imparting [Dr. Lampe still thinks of fountains as *sources*, having the power in themselves of imparting] a saving knowledge of God, is evident from his own statements on the subject. He says : ‘ Unless God's authority is discerned in the forms of the reason there is no ground upon which any of the heathen could ever have been saved, for they know nothing of

Bible or Church. If they are not savingly enlightened by the Light of the world in the forms of the reason the whole heathen world is lost forever.' (Inaug. 2d ed. pp. 88, 89.) The divine authority in the reason therefore does savingly enlighten, in the view of Dr. Briggs."

"The facts [says Dr. Lampe] that God can give evidence of himself to the man's soul, and that the man has the power of certifying truth, that he can receive communications from God, and be the subject of gracious influences, show indeed, that as created in the image of God, man is endowed with a moral nature, but does not at all prove that his reason is a great fountain of divine authority."

If Dr. Lampe had grasped the proper meaning of the word "fountain," he would have seen that this reasoning is self-contradictory. It both accepts Dr. Briggs' view and rejects it. But neither of the above quotations from Dr. Lampe's argument gives any definite information as to whether the Prosecuting Committee agree with Dr. Briggs' view of the possible salvation of a heathen without the Bible. But how about the following? —

"Christ is supreme in the Church and in all matters of faith and life. But we know nothing about Him except through the Bible story. The truth by means of which He saves and assures His people is treasured up in the Scriptures so that we are shut up to them, both for a saving knowledge of God and for assurance. The Bible alone tells us what we need to know about God, ourselves, the plan of salvation, our duty, and the conditions of eternal life and destiny. For this reason the Bible alone,

as against the Church and Reason, gives light in the moral and spiritual realm."

This quotation seems to indicate plainly that in the opinion of the Prosecuting Committee there is no salvation for any one apart from a personal knowledge of the Scriptures, — that all the heathen, not having access to the written Word of God, must be lost. That this is the view of the committee would seem to be confirmed by this further statement by Dr. Lampe :

"The Scripture expressly declares that men by wisdom have not known God. History shows that to be absolutely true. Reason, unaided by revealed truth, has never been able to bring man out of the bondage of sin to God. And therefore 'it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.' God begets men to a new life by the word of truth and saves them by the belief of that truth; for how shall they believe on him of whom they have not heard, and how shall they hear without a preacher?" (Rom. x. 14.)

This would seem to leave no doubt as to the view of the Committee. But to our surprise, in the very next sentence Dr. Lampe takes it all back, shifts his argument to a different point of the compass, and sets out to meet a wholly different issue, as follows : —

"Any discussion in respect to the salvation of infants, incapables, and exceptional cases of heathen through the working of the Divine Spirit is immaterial here; no question is raised in the charges in reference to them.

The matter in hand is wholly different. Can one having the Bible and rejecting it find the way to God through either Church or Reason?"

This cannot but be regarded as a very unsatisfactory way of reasoning. Before taking up this new question Dr. Lampe has raised, let us try to get our bearings. Let us have something definite as to the supremacy of Christ and the salvation of individuals through Him apart from a knowledge of written revelation. We know that Christ is the only Redeemer of mankind; that "there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." But we are taught also that it is not an accurate knowledge of all the facts connected with the life and death of Jesus that saves; nor is it a perfect acquaintance with the plan of redemption revealed in Christ; but it is that intimate relation of the heart and life to God which, whether man fully understands the basis of it or not, the name of Jesus and that alone has made it possible either for man to enter into or for God to accept. When God calls little children away from this world to Himself, we believe they are saved, though they never understood or even heard the precious name; yet we believe their salvation is attributable solely to the fact that Jesus is the "One Mediator between God and men." When a heathen who has never heard the gospel preached reads carefully by the light of nature until he learns to understand something of the invisible things of God by the things that are made, and in his consciousness of

guilt in the sight of his Maker becomes the subject of conviction of sin through the power of that Spirit who worketh even as the wind bloweth, confesses his sin in the sight of Heaven, seeks forgiveness of the Great God, reposes confidence in Him, and manifests his faith by working righteousness, we are taught to believe that God, in accordance with His own plan of redemption which He perfectly understands, can accept that man's faith, even though the man himself may not properly understand the reason why. We know that saving faith does not "stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God;" that salvation is not based upon works, whether of the hands or of the head, but upon Divine wisdom and grace; and that the essential thing on man's part is that "faith which worketh by love," — faith, not in a plan, but in a person; confidence, not in a creed, but in God.

This is a Scriptural and orthodox statement of the doctrine at issue. It is in accord with the Westminster Confession, chapter v., section iii., which states that "God, in His ordinary providence, maketh use of means, yet is free to work without, above, and against them, at His pleasure." It agrees also with chapter x., section iv., where it is set forth that men not professing the Christian religion cannot be saved in any other way whatsoever than through Christ, "be they ever so diligent to frame their lives according to the light of nature and the law of the religion they do profess; and to assert and maintain that they may is very pernicious and to be detested." How, then, are we to understand the first sentence of the Confession, which

affirms that the light of nature and the works of creation and providence "are not sufficient to give that knowledge of God and of His will which is necessary unto salvation?" We are to understand these words to mean, first, that the light of nature and the works of creation and providence are not sufficient to save men apart from the atoning work of Jesus Christ; second, that even though, through Christ and by the working of His Spirit, they may be the means of saving grace to some individuals, they are not sufficient, in the ordinary course of providence, and the ordinary working of the Holy Spirit, to cause all mankind, or even any considerable number of our race, to repent and turn unto God; and third, that they are not sufficient, as a revelation of the will of God, "for the more sure establishment and comfort of the Church against the corruption of the flesh and the malice of Satan and of the world;" in other words, they are not sufficient as "a rule of faith and practice."

This is the doctrine taught by Professor Briggs. It is the doctrine taught by orthodox ministers in the several branches of the great Presbyterian Church. It is possibly the doctrine held by the members of the Prosecuting Committee themselves, though it may have been obscured to them for the moment by their confusion of terms and their inadvertent misapplication of Scripture texts; for example, by taking the phrase "the world by wisdom knew not God" to mean that no individual of the human family has ever been saved without a personal knowledge of

Holy Scripture, or taking the words "faith cometh by hearing" to mean that faith can come only by hearing in the literal sense of the word.

Having arrived at a definite understanding regarding this important question, which the Prosecuting Committee discussed for a time and then abandoned as immaterial, saying that no question is raised in the charges in reference to it, we turn to the consideration of what Dr. Lampe calls the "wholly different" "matter in hand," namely, "Can one having the Bible and rejecting it find the way to God through either Church or Reason?" This question was neither raised nor discussed by Dr. Briggs. It is raised by the Prosecuting Committee, their implication being that Dr. Briggs would answer it in the affirmative. This is one of the inferences they draw from their view of his argument.

Dr. Briggs was incidentally dealing with the question, May one who fails to find religious certainty by his use of the Bible find it through the processes of the reason? And he instanced Martineau as one who claimed that he did,— "that he found God enthroned in his own soul." The scope of Dr. Briggs' argument shows that he believed that Martineau may have been right in this opinion of the way in which he had found certainty.

The prosecution claim that, as they have learned from Martineau's writings that he is one of those who "reject the Scriptures as the authoritative proclamation of the will of God, and the way of salvation through the mediation and sacrifice of the Son of

God as revealed therein," Dr. Briggs must be held as arguing that one who rejects the Scriptures can find the way to God through the reason.

Dr. Briggs replies that the question of Martineau's acceptance or rejection of the Bible was not what was before his mind in adducing the case of Martineau as an illustration of a man finding religious certainty through the forms of the reason, and intimates that if this view of Martineau's belief be emphasized then the illustration he has used is a bad one. But, as Dr. Briggs remarks, "a bad example may discredit a proposition, but it does not disprove it." It may still be true that a man who fails to find religious certainty by his use of the Bible may find it by the use of his reason. Not only may a man reach certainty in this way, but many do. This is a matter of Christian experience.

I did not find religious certainty by my direct reading and study of the Bible. The fault was no doubt my own, but the fact remains. The entrance of God's Word gave me light, but not certainty. The light that was in me was darkness. The natural man did not receive the things of the Spirit of God. Doubts arose in my mind as I read the Word; and the more I read, the more numerous my doubts seemed to become. The plainest statements of the Bible were dark to me. I turned and conferred with men who seemed to know the way to God. I listened to their experiences and reasoning. I reasoned with them and against them, and often felt that I had the best of the argument. I read the works of noted divines, and reasoned with

their writings before me, often reasoning against their reasoning. I finally took to reasoning with myself, and with God in whose existence I believed, though I could not understand His Word, nor trust Him as my Friend. It was while thus musing and reasoning alone, amid the darkness of night, that I found certainty by finding God. And, strangely enough, it was not by my recalling any particular passage of His blessed Word that my doubts were dispelled, but it was by thinking of His goodness in the works of His hands round about me, and in the heavens above my head. Not till then did I see Him revealed in Christ as my Friend. From that moment my heart was at peace with God. Possibly another would express it better by saying, "I found God enthroned in my own soul." By God's grace I did not reject the Bible and trust to reason alone, as Martineau is alleged to have done. On the contrary, I found the Scriptures to be a full and clear revelation of that which had first dawned upon my mind through the contemplation of nature, namely, the simple truth, "God loves you." I need not speak of how much I have learned to prize and love the blessed Word since that experience of many years ago. Such an experience is not unique; it has been the experience of thousands; and it illustrates the unquestionable truth that God places great honor upon the poor remnant of likeness to Himself that still remains in sinful man, and that man's reason, including his whole moral nature, is a fountain, channel, or medium through which the Spirit of God conveys religious certainty to many a soul.

But even if the Prosecuting Committee accept this as a confirmation of the correctness of Dr. Briggs' view, they will still fall back upon the last offence they allege against Dr. Briggs under this first charge. It is an offence on the score of overmuch charity, but appears to be none the less offensive to the prosecution on this account. It is stated in these words: "Dr. Briggs would not refuse these rationalists a place among the company of the faithful." This has reference to such men as Martineau,—men who, whatever may be their errors of belief, fear God and work righteousness. The prosecution, as represented by Dr. Lampe, appear willing to admit of exceptional cases of salvation among the heathen; then surely their charity should be great enough to admit of examples of God's saving mercy being extended to devout persons among the rationalists. I shall never forget how noble that great man, the late venerable Dr. Charles Hodge of Princeton, seemed when, after exposing the heresies of one of the greatest of rationalists, he added, "But I have no doubt he is now singing the praises of Christ in heaven." On being questioned as to how this could be, since he denied Christ on earth, his answer was that "his heart was right; it was only his head that was wrong. He called Jesus a man, and thought He was only man, but he gave Him such homage as could be paid only to a God."

Would that all who imagine they are treading in the footsteps of the venerable Princeton divine, when they are contending only for what they believe

to be soundness in the faith, could have the breadth of view and largeness of heart of that great man. Soundness in the faith is only part of the soundness which God's Word enjoins. We are to be "sound in faith, in charity, in patience;" and here also "the greatest of these is charity."

In view of what Dr. Briggs has said of the supremacy of the Holy Scriptures in the hands of the Spirit, and of its being necessary for the reason to yield to their authority as the voice of God, and of the way in which the Spirit addresses and assures the reason through the Word when the Word has been read or heard, no one can rightly accuse him of intending to teach by the case of Martineau that he believes that Martineau must have found certainty through the reason in opposition to the teaching of the Word of God; much less can it be claimed that he has taught, as the prosecution, by misinterpreting one of his illustrations, have charged him with teaching, that the reason is a fountain of divine authority which may and does of itself savingly enlighten men, or through which men are savingly enlightened independently of the mediation and sacrifice of the Son of God.

That this is far indeed from being his teaching will become still more apparent as we review the cognate doctrine, — "The Church as a fountain of divine authority."

CHAPTER VI.

SECOND CHARGE: THE CHURCH A FOUNTAIN OF DIVINE
AUTHORITY.

THE second charge brought against Dr. Briggs by the Prosecuting Committee is that he teaches "that the Church is a fountain of divine authority, which, apart from the Holy Scripture, may and does savingly enlighten men."

All that has been said of the Committee having persisted in misapprehending the meaning of the word "fountain" in connection with the first charge applies also to this second charge. Just what meaning they attach to the words "apart from the Holy Scripture" is not quite clear. Do they mean, without the actual use of the Bible as a book; or do they mean that Dr. Briggs teaches that the Christian Church may reject the Holy Scriptures and all their teachings, and by some power treasured up in the Church itself, apart even from the work of the Spirit, still savingly enlighten men? The latter appears to be their meaning. But this is a doctrine Dr. Briggs utterly repudiates. It is one of the mistaken inferences which the Committee have drawn from their misconception of the meaning of his words and the scope of his argument.

It is not strange that Dr. Briggs spoke warmly against having such a doctrine imputed to him. He resented this imputation and dismissed it as unworthy of consideration. "I admit," he said, "the statements that 'the reason is a fountain of divine authority,' and 'the Church is a fountain of divine authority,' but I deny all the rest of the doctrines attributed to me in the form and in the language in which the prosecution state them in these two charges. They do not prove and they cannot prove from the inaugural that men who reject the Scriptures and the salvation through Jesus Christ are savingly enlightened by the Reason or by the Church. There are no express statements to this effect in the inaugural. There are no statements which by logical deduction involve such conclusions. You cannot hold me responsible for any inferences made from my statements by the prosecution, or by yourselves, whether such inferences appear valid to you or not. There are certain invalid assumptions which the prosecution are forced to make before they can convince you, even by indirection, of the validity of such inferences. I shall waste no time in an attempt to expound the doctrines which have been invented by the prosecution and wrongly attributed to me."

But Dr. Briggs still found it necessary to meet the contention of the Committee that it is an offence to say that the Church is a fountain of divine authority. In doing so he used the following unmistakable language : —

“The Church has no divine authority in itself apart from God. Its divine authority is in that its chief institutions were divinely appointed, and that these divinely appointed institutions are the ordinary channels of divine grace. The church is a fountain of divine authority. The divine authority flows from God Himself as the sole original fountain head and ultimate source, through the fountain of the Church, and distributes its healing, life-giving streams through all its ministries.

“The Westminster Confession clearly shows that the visible Church is the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ; that He ‘hath given the ministry oracles and ordinances of God’ unto it; and ‘doth by His own presence and Spirit make them effectual.’ . . . Whatever this court may conclude, I declare that the statement of the Confession is a true statement. There is divine authority in the Church; it is Christ’s kingdom. He reigns over it. He inhabits it by His Spirit. He makes its institutions efficacious. He grants access to Himself through His Church. Our Presbyterian fathers rejoiced in such access. Their descendants enjoy this unspeakable privilege. Are we to be robbed of our birthright? Are you ready to banish from the official doctrine of the Presbyterian Church the witnessing Spirit, the indwelling Christ, and the living God in order to incase the Holy Trinity within the covers of a book? Shall we destroy the Church in order to exalt the Bible?”

In the same connection Dr. Briggs showed that the Scriptural and Confessional doctrine regarding the sacraments proves the Church to be a great channel of divine authority.

But the Prosecuting Committee appeared to reject

all these statements and to deny the validity of all this reasoning. Yet they did not attempt to reply to the statements or refute the reasoning. They simply dismissed the matter with this assertion : "The labored argument made by Dr. Briggs in his defence to show that according to the teaching of both the Bible and the standards, the Church and the Reason are great fountains of divine authority, is wide of the mark and wholly unsuccessful." Why it should be thought wide of the mark it is difficult to see, when the question at issue was, Is the Church, as an institution, a fountain, channel, or medium through which God speaks with authority to man ? If his argument be thought unsuccessful and inconclusive, it can easily be supplemented with undeniable proof from all parts of sacred Scripture, not to speak of the seven chapters on the Church in the Confession of Faith, to which the prosecution have made no reference !

Can we hear God saying to Abraham, as He founds the Jewish Church in him and his family, "In blessing I will bless thee and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is upon the seashore : And thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies : And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed," and say that the Church is not a fountain of divine authority ? Can we recall the fact that it was through the Church thus founded and consecrated that Christ came and the whole written Word of God was given to mankind, and not believe that the Church is a channel of divine authority, the very medium through which God Himself came

down to man? Can we hear Paul speaking of the Church as the body of Christ, "the fulness of Him that filleth all in all?" or can we hear John speaking of the Church as the bride of Christ, joining with the Spirit in crying "Come," and refuse to believe that the Church is a fountain of divine authority? And what shall we say of the teaching of Jesus Himself as He says to the first members of the Christian Church: "Ye are the light of the world;" "Ye are my witnesses;" "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen." Can any believer in the Lord Jesus Christ read these words and deny that the Church is a fountain of divine authority?

The unsoundness of the position taken by the prosecution is made still more apparent by the violence they do to Scripture in their attempt to maintain their position. Think, for example, of the incorrectness of such statements as the following made by Dr. Lampe on behalf of the Committee: "Christ and the New Testament writers invariably appeal to the Holy Scriptures as the ultimate authority for the settlement of all religious and moral questions;" "With Christ and the Apostles the Bible alone held the place of absolute and final authority. They never appeal to either Church or Reason, but brought both Church and Reason to the bar of Scripture for judgment and light."

How utterly at variance these statements are with the plain facts of Scripture! Have the prosecution forgotten our Saviour's words in the 18th chapter of Matthew, "Tell it unto the Church"? Does our Lord, in giving directions as to the settlement of a moral question in that passage, make no appeal to the Church? Does He appeal to the Old Testament Scriptures as "the ultimate authority for the settlement" of that moral question? No, He does not enjoin the offended brother to settle the question by reading the law, the prophets, or the psalms to his offending brother; but He bids him *tell it to the Church*, and He makes the Church's authority final: "If he neglect to hear the Church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican." Then, as if to impress upon his followers the great solemnity and real divinity of the Church's authority, Jesus adds these words: "Verily I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." The Westminster divines based section ii. of chapter xxx. of the Confession of Faith upon this solemn utterance.

Or could anything be a more direct contradiction of these remarkable assertions made by the prosecution regarding Christ and His Apostles than the following from the 5th chapter of First Corinthians: "For I, verily, being absent in body but present in Spirit, have already, as though I were present, judged him that hath so wrought this thing, *in the name of our Lord Jesus*, ye being gathered together and my spirit, *with the power of our Lord Jesus*, to deliver

such a one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.”

Among the last words Jesus spake to His disciples, if not the very last before His ascension, were these: “But ye shall receive power when the Holy Ghost is come upon you, and ye shall be my witnesses, both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth.”

Members of the prosecution themselves have no doubt often, in the discharge of solemn ecclesiastical functions, prefaced their official acts with such words as these: “In the name and by the authority of Jesus Christ, the King and Head of the Church.”

The doctrine taught by the Rev. Dr. Briggs, and charged against him as heretical, is so manifestly both Scriptural and Confessional that proving it seems a work of supererogation. Yet it is a fundamental and very sacred doctrine, and when it is denied there is need for lifting it into prominence, lest some should grieve away the Spirit of God by lightly esteeming the Zion which the Lord hath founded, the Jerusalem which He has graven upon the palms of His hands, and whose walls are continually before Him, the Heaven-created fountain through which the benefits of Christ's redemptive work are to be communicated to the whole world, the God-ordained institution without whose agency the inspired Word itself might lie unheeded, and fail to accomplish the thing whereto God sent it.

The prosecution further claimed that Dr. Briggs was guilty of an offence in saying that the majority of

Christians from the Apostolic age have found God through the Church. His language, as quoted by them in this connection, is: "Martyrs and saints, fathers and school-men, the profoundest intellects, the saintliest lives, have had this experience; institutional Christianity has been to them the presence-chamber of God."

This is a simple statement of fact. It is true that the majority of Christians from the Apostolic age have found God through the Church and not directly through the written Word. This is true of the majority of those who find God savingly to-day. The Bible is not given a chance to be the direct means of savingly enlightening men. It is but little read by the great majority of the people of any country. It is read and taught more perhaps in our day than in any previous age. Portions of it are statedly read and discoursed upon in the church and Sabbath-school, and occasionally in the home. There are a few pious hearts in every Christian community who peruse the Bible with silent delight day by day for the comfort it brings them. There are others who search the Scriptures more critically, and make the interpreting and expounding of them the chief work of their lives. But, after all, how many of the representatives of our religion have read the Bible once from beginning to end? The treatment they give the Bible is altogether peculiar. They speak of the book in the most complimentary and reverential terms. They call it the Bible!—the Book of Books!—the Word of God! They fear it, and fight for the idea of its sacred-

ness. They do everything, in short, which the most zealous devotees should be expected to do; but the one thing which, as intelligent men, they should be expected to do, they do not; namely, read the book. That they occasionally read parts of it cannot be denied. That they imagine they have in some way acquired a correct knowledge of what it teaches is equally unquestionable. That they actually have such a knowledge is another matter. What a large proportion of nominally Christian people know about the Bible has been learned at second hand and not from independent study. Their religious knowledge is, to all intents and purposes, traditionary. It has come down to them mainly through oral instruction, and through the writings of those who are supposed to have studied the Bible so thoroughly as to be able to give the substance of it in their own words. Men who would be shocked at the thought of living from year to year without a Bible in their homes will live contentedly from the beginning to the end of their whole lifetime, without ever reading the Bible once throughout. The Book is sacred in their eyes only in an outward and material sense, and is of value to them as a fetich is of value to a heathen. It is expected to banish sin as a piece of cedar wood will banish moths. It is relied on for salvation as the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord was relied upon in the disastrous fight with the Philistines.

With the Bible thus neglected and misused, how do the majority of Christians find God but through the Church? This is the doctrine of the Westminster

standards: "The Spirit of God maketh the reading, *but especially the preaching* of the Word, an effectual means of convincing and converting sinners, and of building them up in holiness and comfort through faith unto salvation." (Shorter Catechism, Q. 89.) *Preaching* is not using the Scriptures directly. It is one of the distinctive functions of the Church. There may not be one sentence from the Bible in the whole discourse. As a matter of fact, Scripture statements do not form more than the hundredth part of the average gospel sermon.

But the Westminster standards teach that there are other "effectual means of salvation" besides the Word, one of which is the sacraments. Their answer to the question "How do the sacraments become effectual means of salvation?" is, "The sacraments become effectual means of salvation, not from any virtue in them, or in him that doth administer them; but only by the blessing of Christ, and the working of His Spirit in them that by faith receive them" (Shorter Catechism, Q. 91), or, to quote the answer as it is given in the Larger Catechism, Q. 161, "The sacraments become effectual means of salvation, not by any power in themselves, or any virtue derived from the piety or intention of him by whom they are administered, but only by the working of the Holy Ghost, and the blessing of Christ, by whom they are instituted." Yet the Prosecuting Committee deny that the Church is a great fountain of divine authority, and that the sacraments of the Church, and institutional Christianity as a whole, have been to

the majority of Christians the presence-chamber of God!

If further testimony were needed against the heresy of this denial, it would be easy to furnish it. We cannot tell all the ways in which the sacraments Baptism and the Lord's Supper bring Christians near to God, but there are some outward ways with which every one who has had the care of souls is familiar. Here is a pastor's testimony: —

“Among the many whom I have seen come out of darkness into light, the majority were led, not by means of the direct reading of the Word, but by means of the sacraments, and especially the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. It was in connection with its observance that they were first led to think seriously regarding their relation to God. It was by committing themselves to a godly life in presence of others, by sitting at the Lord's table, that they were most powerfully helped to live consistent lives. A single example may serve to illustrate both these statements.

On a Monday evening, following a Communion Sabbath, there called on me a much respected merchant of the city in which I was then a pastor. He spoke with his usual calmness of manner, but was in great disquietude of spirit. ‘I have been greatly troubled,’ said he, ‘ever since I was at church yesterday morning. I sat in the same pew with my wife, but the bread and the cup were passed by me to her, as I am not a communicant. I said to myself then, and I have been saying it ever since, What does this mean? And how long is it to last? But I am not fit to be a communicant.’ I spoke to him of the love of Jesus and of His willingness to receive him, and make the act of confessing Him before men a means

of grace to him; and by God's blessing that dear member of my flock, with whom God's Spirit was thus striving, came out into the light. Two months later as I received him to the Communion of the church and saw him sitting with his beloved wife at the table of the Lord, I said within myself, Here is another example of that meaning of the Lord's Supper which Jesus evidently had in mind as He prayed at the time He instituted it, — 'that they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: *that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.*' When last heard from that Christian brother, who was thus brought out of darkness into light by means of the sacrament of the Supper, was rejoicing in the light and witnessing a good confession."

How many thousands have been brought to Christ through simply witnessing the observance of the Lord's Supper, and to how many thousands of thousands both Baptism and the Lord's Supper have been "effectual means of salvation," in those hidden ways perhaps more directly referred to in the Westminster Confession and Catechisms, eternity alone can reveal. But enough has been said in proof and illustration of this precious doctrine, for adhering to which Dr. Briggs was condemned!

The prosecution quote as part of his offence in this connection these words of Dr. Briggs regarding the above doctrine: "It is difficult for many Protestants to regard this experience as any other than pious illusion and delusion." I should hardly have thought this statement correct, had not the Prosecuting Com-

mittee, if not the majority of the Assembly furnished an actual illustration of its truth. But I cannot doubt that, on carefully examining this doctrine, they will gladly reverse their judgment.

Another proof of Dr. Briggs' alleged heresy relied on by the prosecution is that he has said that "Newman could not reach certainty through the Bible, striving never so hard," but that he found God through the Church. All that need be said regarding this is, first, that it was a statement by Dr. Briggs of what Newman himself claimed to be the fact in his case; and, second, that there is some resemblance in this alleged fact between Newman's case and that of his great evangelical cotemporary Charles H. Spurgeon. Spurgeon's experience, as often referred to by himself, was that before his conversion he waited on ordinances, read his Bible, and reasoned about the things of God, but could find no peace; and that it was on going into a church and hearing a sermon preached from the old familiar words, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God and there is none else," that he found peace. One would almost think that in arranging and controlling the circumstances connected with the conversion of His honored servant, Spurgeon, the Lord had before Him the present unhappy controversy in one of the great branches of His Church, and that He so ordered the manner of Spurgeon's conversion as to show to all His people how jealous He is of the honor of His Church, as well as of His Word and the moral nature with which He has endowed His

intelligent creature, — man. Spurgeon did not reach certainty through his use of the Word alone. God saw that both the Church and the Reason were also honored before He allowed His servant's feet to be set upon the Rock.

It was not in precisely the same way indeed that Newman found peace, for "there are diversities of operations;" yet it was through the Church, in some sense, that he believed he finally reached certainty.

This brings us to what may be termed the head and front of Dr. Briggs' offending in the opinion of his opponents, and of not a few of his friends. Let it be stated in the language of the prosecution:—

"Again he says: 'Spurgeon is an example of the average modern evangelical, who holds the Protestant position, and assails the Church and Reason in the interest of the authority of Scripture. But the average opinion of the Christian world would not assign him a higher place in the kingdom of God than Martineau or Newman. May we not conclude on the whole that these three representative Christians of our time, living in or near the world's metropolis, have, each in his way, found God and rested on Divine authority? . . . Men are influenced by their temperaments and environments which of the three ways of access to God they may pursue.'"

In dealing with these statements of Dr. Briggs, which are unfortunately taken out of their setting in the inaugural, and away from their context, the prosecution inadvertently make mistake after mistake. They first say: "Here Dr. Briggs not only teaches that men may and do find God savingly through any one of

the three fountains of divine authority." Dr. Briggs might have been correct had he said this, but it is not what he did say. What he said was that "men are influenced by their temperaments and environments which of the three ways of access to God they may *pursue*." A glance at the argument in the inaugural in which the sentence occurs shows that he does not teach that a man must find God savingly only through the way of searching for certainty which he mainly pursues; and, in any case, this whole argument presupposes the atonement made by Christ, and the work of the Holy Spirit, as underlying each of the three media of authority, as that which makes it possible for a man to find access to God through any or all of these channels.

This is the first mistake made by the prosecution in dealing with these quotations from the inaugural; and here is the second: "but admits that the Bible, as the only way for obtaining salvation and certainty, as held by Spurgeon, is the Protestant doctrine." There are two errors here: first, Dr. Briggs does not admit that Spurgeon held that the Bible is the *only* way of obtaining salvation and certainty, — Christ is the only way; and second, he does not admit that holding that the Bible is the only way of salvation is the Protestant doctrine. He takes Spurgeon as an example of the average modern evangelical, who holds the Protestant doctrine; but he claims that the evangelical Protestant doctrine is that, while the Bible is "the only *infallible* rule of faith and practice," the Spirit of God, in savingly

enlightening men, and applying the redemption purchased by Christ, can and does work also through the Church and the Reason. This makes the next error into which the prosecution fall, in their argument in this connection, apparent. It is contained in their words: "And therefore, since the Presbyterian Church is a Protestant Church, he convicts himself of teaching doctrines which are not Presbyterian." The prosecution here attribute to Dr. Briggs premises which he does not hold, and which are, therefore, logically false; and their conclusion is accordingly false.

But what did Dr. Briggs mean by speaking of Spurgeon, Martineau, and Newman as three representative Christians? It was thought by some in the Assembly that he had placed the three on the same evangelical equality, and had held up Martineau and Newman as being as worthy of imitation in all respects as Spurgeon. In supposing this they forgot the sense in which Dr. Briggs used the word "representative," — not as representative of all that Christians ought to be, but as representative of the three great classes under consideration, — Spurgeon representing those who give the highest place theoretically to the authority of the Scriptures; Martineau representing those who give the highest place theoretically to the Reason; and Newman representing those who give the highest place theoretically to the Church.

Some were still further offended by the statement that the average opinion of the Christian world would

not assign Spurgeon a higher place in the Kingdom of God than Martineau or Newman. But Dr. Briggs was speaking, not of Presbyterianism, or even Protestantism, but of *historical* Christianity, as will be remembered by recalling the statement, "There are *historically* three great fountains of Divine Authority." It is without question a simple fact, as Dr. Briggs showed in his defence, that the Christian world, in the sense in which the term was used in the inaugural, would not assign Spurgeon a higher place in the Kingdom of God than Martineau or Newman, whether they are right or wrong in their estimate of the religious or ecclesiastical greatness of these three eminent men. To quote from Dr. Briggs' own language before the court: —

"It may seem strange to some of you that the average opinion of the Christian world would not assign him (Spurgeon) a higher place in the Kingdom of God than Martineau or Newman. But a little reflection ought to convince you that it is so. Spurgeon is the hero of the Evangelical party in the Church. He was generally esteemed to be the greatest preacher of the gospel in our generation. His sermons have been of incalculable benefit to multitudes. I yield to none in admiration of Spurgeon as a master of sacred eloquence. It was my privilege to enjoy many times listening to his eloquence, and to know a great deal of the work he was doing. But any one who understands the state of religious opinion in England knows that Spurgeon only represented a party among the nonconformists, and that a considerable portion of them would not assign him a higher place than Martineau or Newman. He lived to find himself in a hopeless minority

in his own denomination, and to separate from the mass of nonconformists, whom he accused of being on 'the down-grade.' . . . In the average opinion of the Church of England, Spurgeon would certainly assume the lowest place of the three. Among Roman Catholics, Newman would have the pre-eminence. Among German Protestants, Martineau would hold the highest rank. In North America, without doubt Spurgeon is in greatest estimation. . . . But suppose I make a mistake in statistics, and my opinion is wide of the facts, — is such a mistake heresy?"

Any one who perceives the scope of the inaugural will have no difficulty in understanding the reference made to Spurgeon, Martineau, and Newman. Dr. Briggs was not writing simply for Presbyterians. He had not even Evangelical Protestantism alone in view. He was taking into view the whole nominally Christian world, with all its varying churches, sects, and parties. It was not his purpose to exalt any sect or individual at the expense of another. Nor was he aiming at making either his own or any other denomination more narrowly exclusive, and more intensely loyal to its own historic position. He was thinking of possible union rather than division, of peace rather than hostility between those of every name who are seeking in various ways to be the children of the same heavenly Father. He was striving to find out what truths were common to all the three great classes into which the Christian world is divided. His aim being to bring all to rightly acknowledge the authority of Scripture, he made "the Authority

of Scripture" his theme. As a proper and necessary introduction to this theme, he examined "the Church and the Reason as seats of Divine authority," "because," as he says in the inaugural, "they open our eyes to see mistakes that are common to the three departments." The Christian scholar who is willing to give false systems credit for any good that may be in them, and at the same time to honestly admit anything false that may be in the better system which he has the happiness to call his, and who, without relinquishing any essential truth, is searching for a basis of religious faith and life broad enough for the whole Christian world to unite upon, is surely, in this age of vast endeavors and grand achievements, engaged in a task which deserves the encouragement of all lovers of God and man.

The last effort to convict Dr. Briggs of heresy by means of this second charge is contained in the statement of the prosecution that according to the views of Dr. Briggs we must recognize the Church of Rome as a great fountain of Divine authority, able to give men, without or above the Bible, a saving knowledge of God, and divine assurance.

I have never regarded the Roman Catholic Church as occupying the same plane with evangelical churches; I believe it to be full of errors, and wholly mistaken in many of its aims and claims. Yet I am bound to acknowledge that all this does not exclude it from being part of the visible Church. I believe the doctrine taught in section iv., chapter xxv. of the Confession: "This Catholic Church hath been

sometimes more, sometimes less visible. And particular churches which are members thereof are more or less pure, according as the doctrine of the gospel is taught and embraced, ordinances administered, and public worship performed more or less purely in them." Section v. says: "The purest churches under heaven are subject both to mixture and error; and some have so degenerated as to become no churches, but synagogues of Satan." But no one is warranted in applying this last clause to the Roman Catholic Church. Section vi., chapter xxv., represents the Pope of Rome as Antichrist; but even if the Westminster divines were right in this,—which many intelligent Presbyterians question,—that itself would not blot the Roman Catholic Church out from being part of the visible Church.

Those who would see the proof of this statement have only to look unto Jesus. If ever a church had become corrupt, it was the Jewish Church at the time of our Lord's advent. Its leaders were hypocrites, a generation of vipers, deceivers, making the Word of God of none effect through their tradition, shutting up the kingdom of heaven, neither entering it themselves nor suffering those to enter who gladly would. They were a thousand times more positively Antichrist than the leaders in any church of to-day. That church which had once been a "well-watered garden" had become "a dry ground." Yet it was out of that "dry ground" that there sprang the Plant of Renown. And Jesus honored that degenerate church. He observed its rites; He kept its laws; He worshipped in its synagogues.

We know that there are devout followers of Christ in the Roman Catholic Church of to-day. We have seen them in our homes ; we have known them elsewhere. They may have no Bibles, and may not be allowed to read the Bible we would place in their hands. They may never have attended any church but their own ; yet, full of error though it be, there is manifestly truth enough and Divine authority enough in connection with that church for the Spirit of God to make use of as a means of saving grace to these earnest souls, whom you may know by their fruits to be true branches of the Living Vine.

The day has gone by when any minister or member of the Presbyterian Church can be justly condemned as a heretic for holding the doctrine that the Roman Catholic Church is a part of the Church Visible.

In our review of the Bible, the Church, and the Reason as three great fountains of Divine authority, we have found that, when properly understood, Dr. Briggs' statement is eminently in accord with both Scripture and the Westminster standards.

These three fountains of Divine authority, or means by which man, through Christ and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, is led back to God, may be found summed up in a single sentence of the Westminster Assembly's Shorter Catechism, in the words : " The outward and ordinary means whereby Christ communicateth to us the benefits of redemption are his ordinances, especially the *Word*, *sacraments*, and *prayer*, all which are made effectual to the elect

for salvation." If for "the Word, sacraments, and prayer" we substitute "the Bible, the Church, and the Reason," to which these three means of grace well correspond, we see, as we have seen in other ways, that this doctrine for which Dr. Briggs has been condemned is the doctrine of the Westminster standards.

The same three fountains of Divine authority are also summed up in one brief passage of the Word of God (Rom. x. 13-21): "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." This is *the reason* exercised in prayer. "How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him whom they have not heard?" This does not exclude the possibility of hearing God speaking through His works, and particularly through the conscience, reason, and whole moral nature of man; but how, under ordinary circumstances, and in the ordinary exercise of Divine grace, can they be expected to hear even through these channels without a preacher? "And how shall they preach except they be sent?" This preaching and sending of the preacher is the work of the *Church*. But with the work of the Church the *Word* comes in; for both the Church's life and preaching are based upon the Word. "Even as it is written, 'How beautiful are the feet of them that bring glad tidings of good things!' But they did not all hearken to the glad tidings. For Isaiah saith, 'Lord, who hath believed our report?' So belief cometh of hearing, and hearing by the Word of Christ. But I say, did

they not hear? Yes, verily. ‘Their sound went out into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world,’” — a quotation from the fourth verse of the nineteenth Psalm with reference to God’s works, confirming the doctrine that men should hear God speaking in His works, and exercise faith upon such hearing.

“But I say did Israel not know?” Israel had better knowledge than could be derived from nature and reason alone, yet did not make as good use of it as some among the heathen made of the less clear light they possessed. “First, Moses saith: ‘I will provoke you to jealousy with that which is no nation, with a nation void of understanding will I anger you.’

“And Isaiah is very bold and saith: ‘I was found of them that sought me not; I became manifest unto them that asked not of me.’ But as to Israel he saith: ‘All the day long did I spread out my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people.’” How very clearly taught throughout this whole passage is the truth that some men, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, may find God through the medium of the reason, without the written Word, while, without the saving influence of the Holy Spirit, others may have the Word in their hands or most faithfully preached to them, and fail to find God. Is not the former of these two facts illustrated by exceptional cases among the heathen of to-day? And is not the latter fact only too sadly exemplified in the life and conduct of thousands in every Christian land?

Had Dr. Briggs taught that the Bible alone is a fountain, channel, or medium of Divine authority, through which mankind are savingly influenced by the Spirit of God, and that the Spirit never works through the instrumentality of the Church or the Reason, either together with or apart from the written Word, it would have been right to have charged him with teaching heresy. But to convict him of heresy for teaching the doctrine regarding the Bible, the Church, and the Reason which he does teach, was worse than a mistake. The Church should have been grateful to him for calling attention to the proper relations of these three God-ordained media of Divine authority which seem to be so imperfectly understood.

CHAPTER VII.

THIRD CHARGE: INERRANCY OF SCRIPTURE.

TO use the language of the prosecution, "The third charge has reference to the subject of inspiration. In it Dr. Briggs is charged with teaching that errors may have existed in the original text of Scripture as it came from its authors. Dr. Briggs admits the correctness of the facts stated in the specifications, and that the charge correctly states his teaching on this point, but denies that it is an offence."

In opening his defence against this charge Dr. Briggs said, "I agree to the doctrine that Holy Scripture 'is the Word of God written,' 'immediately inspired,' and 'the rule of faith and practice.'" In the course of his defence he affirmed his belief in "plenary or full inspiration." He further said: "The prosecution cite section iv. in order to prove that Holy Scripture 'is the Word of God.' There can be no doubt of this. . . . I can sincerely subscribe to both statements, 'is the Word of God' and 'contains the Word of God.' Throughout his whole defence Dr. Briggs steadfastly maintained the position he had previously held, as indicated by the following answers, given by him to questions submitted to him by the

directors of Union Theological Seminary, and used as evidence in his trial before the Presbytery of New York:—

Question 1. “Do you consider the Bible, the Church, and the Reason as co-ordinate sources of authority?”

Answer. “No.”

Question 2. “Do you believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the only infallible rule of faith and practice?”

Answer. “Yes.”

Question 3. “Would you accept the following as a satisfactory definition of inspiration: ‘Inspiration is such a Divine direction as to secure an infallible record of God’s revelations in respect to both faith and doctrine?’”

Answer. “Yes.”

Question 4. “Do you believe the Bible inerrant in all matters concerning faith and practice, and in everything in which it is a revelation from God as a vehicle of Divine truth, and that there are no errors which disturb its infallibility in these matters or in its records of the historic events and institutions with which they are inseparably connected?”

Answer. “Yes.”

Question 5. “Do you believe that the miracles recorded in the Scriptures are due to an extraordinary exercise of Divine energy?”

Answer. “Yes.”

When a minister of Dr. Briggs’ well-known intelligence and candor could sincerely subscribe to such doctrines as these, and could conscientiously subscribe to the form of doctrine submitted to Presbyterian

ministers at the time of their ordination, the Prosecuting Committee might have been assured that there was some misunderstanding on their part as to his teaching, when they undertook to convince him and convince the whole Church that he held a totally different doctrine from that which he intelligently and honestly said he held. If he refused to say that there were no errors in the autographs or original manuscripts of the writers of the Bible, they might have been satisfied that he had reasons for such refusal, which, when properly understood by them, would be found not to conflict with the terms of his subscription and his ordination vows. If he believed there were errors of a literary and incidental kind in the text of Scripture as we now have it, and that some of these errors may have been in the original manuscripts, they might have known that he regarded those unimportant inaccuracies in some such way as they were regarded by the late venerable Dr. Charles Hodge, of Princeton, when he wrote, in his "Systematic Theology" (vol. i. p. 170), the words: "No sane man would deny that the Parthenon was built of marble, even if here and there a speck of sandstone should be detected in its structure. Not less unreasonable is it to deny the inspiration of such a book as the Bible, because one sacred writer says that on a given occasion twenty-four, and another says that twenty-three, thousand men were slain." This is precisely the view Dr. Briggs holds, and for holding which he has been charged with heresy, and suspended from the gospel ministry!

This review might rest here, but the doctrine of the Divine inspiration of Holy Scripture is so important a doctrine, and so many seemingly conflicting statements have been made regarding it in connection with the trial of Dr. Briggs, that the question cannot properly be dismissed at this point. It is right that lovers of truth should review the doctrine in the light of the evidence and arguments presented at the trial, and ascertain, if possible, whether the views of Dr. Briggs or of the prosecution are correct, and what theory of inspiration the Assembly intended to endorse. Those who make such a review, with the official report of the Washington Assembly before them, will find that the point above referred to is not the only instance in which Dr. Briggs is in agreement, and the prosecution at variance, with the venerable Princeton divine, — whom the late Dr. Candlish, when both divines were alive, called “the greatest of living theologians.”

Those who undertake such a review will find, however, that, owing to an almost entire absence of the definition of terms, and from the consequent fact that technical words and phrases are often used by the prosecution in an entirely different sense from that in which they are understood by the defendant, the arguments presented are in some instances such a tissue of irrelevancy as a reviewer is seldom called upon to deal with, and, if possible, disentangle.

Every word that clothed a concept regarding which there was difference of opinion between the prosecution and Dr. Briggs should have been specially considered, and its technical meaning clearly defined. Failing this, confusion was inevitable.

Take the word "inspiration" for example ; what does it mean ?

Here is Dr. Dick's definition of the term : " Inspiration is an influence of the Holy Spirit upon the understandings, imaginations, memories, and other mental powers of the sacred writers by which they were qualified to communicate to the world the knowledge of the will of God."

Here is a definition of the term by Dr. Charles Hodge : " Inspiration was an influence of the Holy Spirit on the minds of certain select men, which rendered them the organs of God for the infallible communication of His mind and will."

Neither the Holy Scriptures nor the Westminster standards contain any definition of the term. They deal with the fact of inspiration and leave the precise nature of it to be learned from the exemplification which the Scriptures furnish of the exercise of it. Consequently no one is bound by any particular definition of the term or any particular theory regarding it. But when a controversy arises in which the fact of inspiration is involved, it is necessary that the contending parties shall have either a standard definition by which to test the correctness of their respective theories, or else that each of the parties shall furnish a definition of the term as he understands it, that the theories of both may be brought to the test of what the common faith of the Church, based upon the Word of God, regards as the orthodox meaning of the term.

Dr. Briggs has subscribed to a definition of the term " inspiration " which will be seen to be in accord with

the two given above. It is as follows: "Inspiration is such a Divine direction as to secure an infallible record of God's revelations in respect to both faith and doctrine."

The prosecution do not accept this definition but they furnish no other. An examination of their arguments, however, shows that they appear to hold quite a different doctrine from any of the above, namely, the doctrine that inspiration does not extend merely to the inspired man's utterances or writings in communicating to the world the knowledge of the will of God, but also to his character and to *all* his utterances. They accordingly say: "Inspiration, as understood by Dr. Briggs, is clearly not that kind of inspiration which will keep the inspired writer from making mistakes or telling lies." Their contention seems to be that no inspired writer could ever make a mistake or tell a lie whether in communicating to the world the knowledge of the mind and will of God or at other times. They seem to hold that everything recorded in the Bible as the utterance of a man who was known to be used at any time as one of the organs of God for the infallible communication of His mind and will, must always be inherently and absolutely true. They think it is heresy to say that an inspired man could ever utter anything that was not correct; or at least, that all his utterances recorded in the Scriptures must of necessity be correct, whether they are communications of the mind and will of God or are simply the man's own utterances. Dr. Briggs, on the other hand, holds that it is only when speaking under the

guidance of Divine inspiration, and therefore communicating the mind and will of God, that the inspired speaker or writer is uttering infallible truth. At other times and in regard to other matters than the revelation of the mind and will of God he may err like an ordinary man.

Who is right in this, Dr. Briggs or the prosecution? Let Dr. Charles Hodge answer. He says that the sacred writers —

“were fully inspired as to all that they teach, whether of doctrine or fact. This of course does not imply that the sacred writers were infallible except for the special purpose for which they were employed. They were not imbued with plenary knowledge. As to all matters of science, philosophy, and history, they stood on the same level with their contemporaries. They were infallible only as teachers, and when acting as the spokesmen of God. Their inspiration no more made them astronomers than it made them agriculturists. Isaiah was infallible in his predictions although he shared with his countrymen the views then prevalent as to the mechanism of the universe. Paul could not err in anything he taught, although he could not recollect how many persons he had baptized in Corinth.”

A little farther on, in the same connection, Dr. Hodge adds: —

“Nor does the Scriptural doctrine on this subject imply that the sacred writers were free from errors in conduct. Their infallibility did not arise from their holiness, nor did inspiration render them holy. Balaam was inspired, and Saul was among the prophets. David committed

many crimes, although inspired to write psalms. Peter erred in conduct at Antioch; but this does not prove that he erred in teaching. The influence which preserved him from mistakes in teaching was not designed to preserve him from mistakes in conduct." (Systematic Theology, vol. i. p. 165.)

If this be not sufficient to prove the correctness of the position the prosecution once and again almost tauntingly attribute to Dr. Briggs, turn to the thirteenth chapter of the First Book of Kings and read at the eighteenth verse:—

“And he said unto him, I also am a prophet as thou art, and an angel spake unto me by the Word of the Lord, saying, Bring him back with thee into thine house, that he may eat bread and drink water. But he lied unto him. So he went back with him and did eat bread in his house, and drank water. And it came to pass, as they sat at the table, that the Word of the Lord came unto the prophet that brought him back: and he cried unto the man of God that came from Judah, saying, Thus saith the Lord, Forasmuch as thou hast been disobedient unto the mouth of the Lord, and hast not kept the commandment which the Lord thy God commanded thee, but camest back and hast eaten bread and drunk water in the place, of the which He said to thee, Eat no bread, and drink no water; thy carcase shall not come into the sepulchre of thy fathers.”

And when even that old lying prophet spoke under the guidance of Divine inspiration his prediction came true. Hereafter the prosecution and all others, should

be careful to quote 2 Peter i. 20-21, not as it is in the Old (King James') Version of the Bible, but in the Revised Version, as follows: "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of private interpretation. For no prophecy ever came by the will of man: but men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Ghost." The Old Version says, "holy men of God spake;" but it is evident from this passage in First Kings, as well as other passages that might be cited, that men who were not holy sometimes spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, just as it has been made clear also that holy men did not always speak as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. They often spake as ordinary men, and their utterances, whether correct or incorrect, are truthfully recorded when they have been chosen to form part of the book which we know as, and which truly is, the Word of God.

Was the lying utterance of the old prophet inspired of God? No one will claim that it was, yet it is a part of the Sacred Scriptures. Then, is all scripture not given by inspiration of God? Are we to regard the rendering of 2 Timothy iii. 16, in the Revised Version, as decisive as to this?—the reading being, not "All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God," nor "every scripture is inspired of God," as in the margin of the Revised Version, but "Every scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching," etc. Shall we adopt this view and say that some statements in Scripture are not inspired? No, by no means. But whatever interpretation be put upon 2 Tim. iii. 16, it is manifest that some parts of Scrip-

ture are not inspired in the same sense in which others are ; and it is here that the prosecution have fallen into the greatest number of mistakes and the greatest confusion. They appear to have treated the word " inspiration " as if it were always to be understood in the same sense, — as if the malicious utterances of Satan recorded in Holy Scripture were inspired in the same sense with the seraphic utterances of the prophet Isaiah or the apostle John.

Let us have a definite understanding of what inspiration is, from a careful analysis of the orthodox belief regarding it. " Inspiration " in itself is one and the same always. It is the special in-breathing of the Holy Spirit to qualify men for certain work in connection with the speaking and writing of the Holy Scriptures and the transmission of them in canonical form to mankind as the Word of God. While inspiration is always the same in this, that it infallibly guides the subjects of it in doing the particular work assigned them, the work assigned to different inspired men is different.

1. Some men, under the special guidance of the Holy Ghost, uttered eternal and unchangeable truth, the very mind and will of God. This was true of the prophets, apostles, and others who " spake from God, being moved by the Holy Ghost." This exercise of inspiration was often, if not always, accompanied by " revelation," the imparting of knowledge.

2. Others, under the special guidance of the Holy Ghost, recorded with infallible wisdom and truthfulness whatever God designed should be embodied in

the Holy Scriptures. It might be said that such men selected and wrote as they were moved by the Holy Ghost; yet it was the selecting of what they wrote that was infallibly wise, and the recording of it that was infallibly true, and not necessarily in every case the thoughts recorded. The thoughts and words of good men who sometimes spoke incorrectly and unwisely are faithfully recorded when they form part of the Holy Scriptures. So are the words, whether wise or foolish, of wicked men. So also are the words of Satan himself.

3. Others, under the special guidance of the Holy Ghost, collected and arranged the various writings that were either spoken or written, or both spoken and written, under the guidance of the same Spirit; so that they form the canon of Sacred Scripture.

It is in the second and third of the above senses that the Bible is wholly inspired. Whatever may be said of some statements recorded in Scripture, when viewed in the light of the first of the above senses of inspiration, in the light of the second and third of the above senses "every scripture is *given* by inspiration of God."

There is a fourth sense in which the Bible is the inspired word of God; namely, in that when, through a proper understanding of the consent of all its parts, the teaching of the Spirit by means of this word of revelation is learned, that teaching is the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. It is the revealed will of God.

The prosecution, through Dr. Lampe, make the

statement that "the entire epistle to the Hebrews carries out this idea that the statements of Scripture are the sayings of God." If by this they mean that all the statements contained in the Bible are utterances that were inspired of God in the first sense given above, they state what is obviously not correct. Yet in the second, third, and fourth senses given above, all the statements of Scripture form the Word of God, the "most necessary" revelation of His will to man.

Some who hold that the whole Bible has been written and given to man under special Divine guidance, do not call that providential superintendence which has secured the infinitely wise and truthful recording of all that is contained in the Bible "inspiration" (just as they and others do not call by the name of "inspiration" the providential oversight by which the Word of God has been kept pure through all the ages). They call by the name "inspiration" only the act of God in enduing men to speak or write that which is in and of itself the eternal and unchangeable truth of God. But so long as they hold to the *fact* of infallible guidance having been given for the second, third, and fourth purposes above named, it matters little by what name that guidance is called, so long as no violence is done to Scripture teaching.

Now, the strange confusion, misunderstanding, and disagreement between the prosecution and Dr. Briggs has been due mainly, so far as this question is concerned, to a misunderstanding and misuse of the term "inspiration."

The prosecution seem never to discriminate between inspiration in the first sense given above and inspiration in the second, third, or fourth senses. They appear to assume that while there is only one kind of inspiration, that inspiration is exercised in only one way, and for the doing of only one thing. They reason as if every person who wrote or spoke any part of what is contained in the Bible must have been a saint, and that every statement recorded in the Bible must be inherently correct, as well as truthfully recorded and chosen with infallible wisdom to form part of the Scriptures, which shall be profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.

The prosecution do not attempt any explanation of the fact that statements are recorded in the Bible which are in themselves the very opposite of the truth of God. The following sentence is an example of the vague and general way in which they speak of the whole subject: "The books were written by men, yet the God of truth is in such a deep sense their Author that everything written therein is to be received, believed, and obeyed, because it is the Word of God."

Is the devil's statement, "Ye shall not surely die," to be received, believed, and obeyed because it is in the Bible? Are we to take every statement we find in the Bible as in itself an expression of the mind and will of God? May we take any sentence we find anywhere recorded in the Bible and regard it as in itself absolutely correct simply because it is truthfully recorded in the Word of God? May we choose a text

indiscriminately and call it one of the true sayings of God? I was taught a different doctrine at Princeton, and in a way that impressed it upon my memory. It was in connection with the preaching of my "ten-minute sermon" in the "Oratory." I chose for my text a verse that had long been precious to me (Job xxii. 21): "Acquaint now thyself with Him and be at peace; thereby good shall come unto thee." At the close of my effort, Professor C. Wistar Hodge, D. D., the presiding critic on that evening, called attention to the fact that I had spoken of the words of the text as the words of God, and had treated them as such; while, as a matter of fact, they were the words of Eliphaz the Temanite, who was not speaking under the guidance of Divine inspiration, and had entirely misunderstood Job's righteous character, and was consequently giving him poor counsel and miserable comfort (see Job xlii. 7). "You are all right this time, however," said the professor; "for the lessons you have drawn from the text are good, and the text itself, as you have interpreted it, is confirmed by other parts of Scripture; but in future look more carefully at the context." I began to learn the lesson then, and have been learning it more and more ever since. But after nearly a quarter of a century of searching the Scriptures, one finds he has still much to learn in order to be thoroughly skilled in "rightly dividing the word of truth." He knows that many errors of doctrine are faithfully recorded in the Word of God, and they are not always labelled "errors."

For the prosecution to demand that a minister shall

say that there are no literary errors recorded in the Bible, when it is well known to contain recorded errors of an unspeakably graver nature, seems very strange. If, as we have seen, all that the Bible contains was not *spoken* by inspired men, and if, as we have also seen, inspired men did not always *speak* as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, as in the case of the old prophet at Bethel, then all that inspiration had to do with these uninspired utterances was to guide as to whether they should or should not be recorded, and if they were to be recorded, to guide to the truthful recording of them. When thus recorded they became part of the inspired record, though not in the first sense above named. They are not to be for instruction in the positive sense of having to be received, believed, and obeyed, but in such other way as the consent of all the parts of Scripture, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, shall teach.

“But,” say the prosecution, “that the Confession does not tolerate the idea of the presence of errors in the Holy Scripture is still further evident from the fact that the entire perfection of the Scripture is given as proof that it is the Word of God, while the assertion is made that the Holy Spirit assures the believer of the ‘infallible truth and divine authority thereof.’ A book which contains errors cannot have the quality of ‘entire perfection,’ and the Holy Spirit could not assure us of its ‘infallible truth.’”

Such reasoning as this would compel any one who accepted it to reject the Bible and declare that it cannot have the quality of entire perfection. It would

lead some to say that since our present translations of the Bible contain errors they are not to be trusted as the Word of God. It would lead others to say that since the false words of Satan are in the Bible it cannot be infallibly true. We may be thankful that the above statement by the prosecution is a misstatement. The statement with which they follow it is true: "Our standards teach the truthfulness of the entire written Bible, because it is the 'very Word' of the God of truth." But the prosecution seem not to understand the true meaning of their own sentence. They have fallen foul of another term which they have failed to define. They have not discerned the distinction between the terms "the very Word of God" and "the very words of God." They evidently think that every sentence of the Bible is inspired in the first of the senses named above, and that the lying words of Satan or of wicked men, with other foolish or inaccurate statements, by being truthfully recorded in the Holy Scriptures, become, not simply parts of the book called, and which truly is, "the Word of God," but become transformed into the "very words" of God, in the sense of having the thought they express indorsed by Him.

In the above quotation the prosecution have stumbled at another simple word which they seem never to have defined to themselves. It is the word "errors." They have failed to perceive the difference between "errors," or "an error," and "error" in the discussion of this subject. The word "errors" as used by Dr. Briggs means wrong statements, inac-

curacies ; the singular of the word would apply to one such mistake. But the word "error" is used in a different sense, namely, that not of inadvertent mistake, but false teaching. Dr. Briggs, in common with all orthodox Presbyterians, holds that the Bible contains no "error" in this sense. Whatever inadvertent mistakes as to dates or other circumstantial matters may be recorded in it, — yes, and whatever false doctrine uttered by Naamathite, Shuhite, or Temanite, or by Satan himself, may be recorded in it, — it never *teaches* error. Dr. Charles Hodge, in his "Systematic Theology," again and again insists upon this distinction. In vol. i. p. 169, he says: "Do the Scriptures *teach* what from any source can be proved not to be true? The question is not whether the views of the sacred writers were incorrect, but whether they *taught* error. For example, it is not the question whether they thought that the earth is the centre of our system, but did they teach that it is?"

Apply this to the Bible as a whole. The question is not what statements the Bible contains, but what does it *teach*? Whatever may be the recorded views of some of those whose false utterances or inaccurate statements are made to form part of the Bible narrative, the Bible itself *teaches* nothing but the truth. Had the prosecution appreciated these distinctions, then instead of saying that "the Confession does not tolerate the idea of the *presence of errors* in the Holy Scriptures," they would have said that "the Confession does not tolerate the idea of the *teaching of error* by the Holy Scriptures." And instead of saying "A book

which *contains errors* cannot have the quality of 'entire perfection,' and the Holy Spirit could not assure us of its 'infallible truth,'” they would have said: “A book which *teaches error* cannot have the quality of 'entire perfection,'” etc.

The prosecution also mistake the meaning of the word “truthfulness.” They evidently think of it as being inherent in words and sentences, instead of in the utterer of the words and sentences and in the doctrines those words and sentences are made to teach. A man is not made truthful simply by uttering words that are true; nor does a truthful man become untruthful by quoting the false words of others. It is by the use he makes of those words that we judge of his veracity.

The prosecution contend that if the Bible contains within its pages any of the false words of men “it lacks the one essential of infallibility, absolute truthfulness of all its contents.” One cannot but be amazed that intelligent men should reason in such a way. “Infallibility” is almost the only term the prosecution have undertaken to give a definition of. But even it they did not define in the technical sense in which it is used in connection with the doctrine of inspiration, but in its common acceptation. It was easier for them to do this. All they had to do was to turn up the word in Webster's Dictionary, and then write down the sentence: “Webster defines the word infallible as 'not fallible; not capable of erring; entirely exempt from liability to mistake; unerring, inerrable.'” But no sooner have they gotten this good,

orthodox, lay definition of the word than they misuse it by coupling it with the word "errors" which they have not found a definition of, and therefore use it in the sense of "error" or false teaching, and say: "In plain English therefore, a book which is pervaded by errors 'to an indefinite extent' cannot be an infallible rule."

But it is unnecessary to go on exposing the fallacies of the argument of the prosecution by which they support equally fallacious charges. Enough has been said to enable the reader to understand that, by failing to have before their minds any clear and correct definition of such terms as "inspiration," "plenary, or full, inspiration," "Word of God," "words of God," "errors," "error," "truthfulness," etc., the prosecution were wholly unable to understand the position of Dr. Briggs. And it was just as impossible for Dr. Briggs to explain his position to them. He displayed great skill in the attempt, but failed. When he spoke of *inspiration* in one sense they understood it in a different sense. When he addressed himself to the task of defending himself in the light of *inspiration* as they appeared to understand the term, he found that they made the word in that sense cover more ground than his own reason and intelligence would allow him to make it cover. He could find no meaning and use of the word that would meet all the purposes they made it serve.

So also when Dr. Briggs spoke of "errors," substantially in the sense of quotations of erroneous statements, as being found in the Bible, they regarded

him as speaking of error, or false teaching, or that which in some way impaired the infallibility of the Bible as the Word of God. It was in vain that he uttered this memorable sentence: "The only errors I have found or ever recognized in Holy Scripture have been beyond the range of faith and practice, and therefore they do not impair the infallibility of Holy Scripture as a rule of faith and practice."

This one sentence, uttered by a man of Dr. Briggs' scholarship and ability as a Biblical critic, is of more value than all the vague theories of inerrancy that have ever been thought out.

Had Dr. Briggs said that he had found that the Bible teaches error, or that its writers disagree in their teaching, one holding one doctrine regarding the origin of man and another another, or one proclaiming one way of salvation and another another, there would then have been cause for alarm. But when, after the most scholarly critical study of ancient manuscripts, and of the Bible in our own language as well as in the original and other tongues, he is able to say that he can neither find, nor see that any other person has found, any errors in the Bible that are of any vital importance whatever, the Church should rejoice, and be glad that it has in its ministry a scholar who is fully able to cope with the foes of the Bible on their own ground, and defend its authority from being interfered with by their unjust allegations.

In the light of this analysis of the orthodox view of inspiration, to which Dr. Briggs subscribes, it is easy to see how he could hold both that the Bible

contains the Word of God and *is* the Word of God ; how he could affirm both that it contains *errors*, and is wholly free from *error*. Not knowing the sense in which these terms are used, the prosecution could no more understand them than, without a proper knowledge of the sense in which the words were used, they could understand Paul's list of paradoxes, in which he speaks of himself and his fellow-Christians "as deceivers, and yet true ; as unknown, and yet well-known ; as dying, and behold we live, . . . as having nothing, and yet possessing all things."

The great Dr. Robert South has a sermon on "The Fatal Imposture and Force of Words," from the text Isaiah v. 20: "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil ; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness ; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter." He opens the outline of his sermon with the words : —

"Here a woe is denounced against those, not only in particular, who judicially pronounce the guilty innocent, and the innocent guilty, but in general, who, by abusing men's minds with false notions, make evil pass for good, and good for evil."

Had Dr. South lived in our day he might have found a striking illustration of his theme in connection with the trial of Dr. Briggs — only that the fatality connected with the imposture and force of words, in this case, was not intentional, but manifestly inadvertent. But, inadvertent though it was, it may be questioned if there has ever been in our day so remarkable an

exhibition of misunderstanding between brethren, from the misuse and misunderstanding of words and terms, as was witnessed at the Washington Assembly. But there is one objection which the prosecution urge against the above orthodox view of inspiration which demands a few words in closing. They claim that "this teaching subjects the Bible to the reason;" that "each man must determine for himself by his own reason or conscience how much may be accepted as the Word of God."

The prosecution seem to have a sacred dread of the thought of using their reason in matters of religion. In all soberness, I believe that this accounts for the singularly unreasonable positions they have taken up in connection with this whole case. They are too sensitive on this point. A little reason is necessary in dealing with the contents of the Bible. Even ordinary common-sense helps. Not a little reason is necessary, but a great deal on the part of some. We must "search the Scriptures." The Bible was not written in such a way as to encourage indolence, but to develop diligence. The doctrine that it is all alike nutritious, and therefore you need not trouble yourself "dividing" it, but may just read a few verses now and then anywhere, is the lazy man's doctrine. If he treats God's great book of nature in this way, full of the goodness of the Lord though it be, he will find himself eating poison instead of wholesome food one day.

In using the Bible one must do more than use his reason, including his conscience and whole moral

nature. He must listen to what the Church has to say through its various ministries and ordinances; and while using the "Word" and the "sacraments," he must not forget "prayer." He must ask for God's Spirit to be given him. "He shall guide you into all the truth." "He shall teach you all things."

Besides all this, one must give his heart to God. The Bible has not been written in such a way that men can arrive at certainty regarding its contents without making a saving use of them. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him, and He will show them His covenant." And one must lead a consistent Christian life if he would reach certainty regarding the Bible and its teachings. If we do His will we shall know of the doctrine. "Unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness." "All the paths of the Lord are lovingkindness and truth unto such as keep His covenant and His testimonies." And one must be pure and gentle and Christlike in all things if he would reach the highest degree of certainty. "The meek will He guide in judgment, the weak will He teach His way." "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." In harmony with all these Scripture statements are the following words of R. Rothe:—

"It is only the pious subject that can speculate theologically. And why? Because it is he alone who has the original datum, in virtue of communion with God, on which the dialectic lays hold. So soon as the original datum is there, everything else becomes simply a matter of logic."

But in no way can the prosecution's objection to the above orthodox doctrine of inspiration be more directly met than by quoting the fifth section of the first chapter of the "Confession of Faith," which both confirms the doctrine and shows that heresy lurks in the heart of their objection to it.

"V. We may be moved and induced by the testimony of the Church to an high and reverend esteem of the Holy Scripture: and the heavenliness of the matter, the efficacy of the doctrine, the majesty of the style, the consent of all the parts, the scope of the whole (which is to give all glory to God), the full discovery it makes of the only way of man's salvation, the many other incomparable excellencies, and the entire perfection thereof, are arguments whereby it doth abundantly evidence itself to be the Word of God; yet notwithstanding, our full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth, and Divine authority thereof, is from the inward work of the Holy Spirit, bearing witness by and with the Word in our hearts."

For further light as to the way of ascertaining the mind of the Spirit as He speaks in the Word, take section ix. of the same chapter of the "Westminster Confession": —

"The infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture is the Scripture itself: and therefore when there is a question about the true and full sense of any scripture (which is not manifold, but one) it must be searched and known by other places that speak more clearly."

CHAPTER VIII.

FOURTH AND FIFTH CHARGES: AUTHORSHIP OF THE
PENTATEUCH AND THE BOOK OF ISAIAH.

THE fourth charge, which accuses Dr. Briggs of heresy for teaching that Moses was not the author of the Pentateuch, and the fifth, which charges him with heresy for teaching that Isaiah was not the author of one half of the book that bears his name, may be considered together, as they stand in the same relation to both Scripture and the Confession of Faith. If the Confessional rules, which, it is alleged, have been alike broken in both cases, are shown not to have been broken in one case, then it follows that they have not been broken in the other. The rules which are said to have been violated are: (1) "that the Holy Scripture evidences itself to be the Word of God by the consent of all the parts;" and (2) "The infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture is the Scripture itself."

The citing of these two rules by the prosecution shows that they feel hampered at the outset by the fact that the Bible nowhere says that Moses was the author of the Pentateuch, or that Isaiah wrote the whole book that bears his name, and that there is no such claim made anywhere in the Confession of Faith.

They find themselves compelled to try to prove this charge of heresy by inference; namely, the inference that teaching that Moses is not the author of the Pentateuch, and that Isaiah did not write the whole book that bears his name, in some way contravenes the two Confessional statements given above.

It is interesting to notice that in seeking to establish this inference, the prosecution inadvertently enter the field of "higher criticism" themselves, and by the very literary methods which they condemn, and by which Dr. Briggs substantiates his views, they seek to overthrow these views. Evidently, however, they are not at home in this field, and tread somewhat cautiously as follows:—

"The Pentateuch itself points to Moses as its author. It speaks of him as a maker of books, in which he wrote history and laws by the command of Jehovah." "The laws of all the codes appear in the Pentateuch as a unit on the background of Israel's wilderness life, not mutually conflicting, but mutually supplementary to each other."

They even quote the opinion of a distinguished "higher critic" in support of their contention; but they quote him at the wrong time. They quote him in support of the statement that Genesis and the rest of the Pentateuch were written by the same author; but, as will presently appear, a scholarly Princeton professor has shown that Genesis was *not* written by Moses. Their quotation is as follows: "It is conceded that Genesis has a common authorship with the other four books. So that we must accept the con-

clusion that the Pentateuch claims Moses as its author. Scholars like Kuenen freely admit this."

Having in a previous sentence affirmed that "A great part of the document is ascribed to Moses," and that "Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy are credited to him as the medium through whom God communicated them to the people, when Israel was in the wilderness, and when Aaron and Eleazer were high priests," and having made the above statement regarding "the laws of all the codes," and the alleged concession regarding the authorship of Genesis, they proceed, after the manner of the "conjectural critics," to reason as follows:—

"If this claim be not true, then the Pentateuch is neither genuine nor authentic, and it must be untrustworthy. If the Pentateuch's claim of Mosaic authorship be false, and the work originated piece by piece during centuries after the death of Moses, the document as it has come to us is a fraud, and no dependence can be placed upon it."

In other words, although the Bible nowhere claims that Moses is the author of the Pentateuch, they *guess* that he was because the Pentateuch itself speaks of him as a maker of books, etc.; they are strengthened in this *conjecture* by the fact that Moses is said to have written parts of the Pentateuch; they are still further encouraged to think that Moses wrote the whole from the fact that many, and a "higher critic" among the number, believe that Genesis has a common authorship with the other four books; *therefore*,

if the claim put forth in this conjecture be not true, the Pentateuch is "a fraud"!

Verily, if this be a fair specimen of the "higher criticism," I for one am not in favor of it. Its premises are too weak and disjointed, and its conclusions too lamely arrived at. It is by means of no such halting logic that accurate scholars of any school reach their conclusions.

The prosecution themselves seem to feel that their logic is not as conclusive as it should be. They supplement it by a few additional sentences of inferential criticism, followed by another concession quoted from the Encyclopædia Britannica (!) as follows: "It is conceded that in the time of Chronicles Moses was already taken to be the author of the Pentateuch (Encyclopædia Britannica, Pentateuch)." Whether the writer of the article quoted from is a "higher critic" or a logician of another kind, is not indicated. The prosecution are not yet satisfied that they have established their contention. They accordingly resort to tradition in the hope of strengthening their premises; but it will be observed from the following quotation that they themselves distrust this new kind of evidence, and impliedly confess its weakness by defending it before it is attacked. Their language is as follows: "The Jewish people for three thousand years have given their united testimony in behalf of the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch. The Christian Church has always united in that testimony. This singular unanimity of God's people on this question for so many centuries is of such great value that it

cannot be sneered out of court as mere traditionalism. Such a consensus is not to be cast aside for the trivial reason that it does not accord with the subjective impressions of the higher critics, which impressions are those of men as fallible as the rest of us."

The next sentence is of special interest in the light of the prosecution's attempt at "higher criticism" as given above: "Conjectural criticism on the Pentateuch has not established its claim to our confidence. For not all those who use it attain to good results when working in fields where the rest of us can follow."

Certainly the prosecution have not attained to good results in their attempt to follow, but then they have followed at too great a distance. May they yet be found, side by side with Dr. Briggs, expert higher critics of the evangelical school.

The next sentence uttered by the prosecution is another curious *non sequitur*. It is a conclusion without any valid premises as its basis, — a "thus" in the sense of "therefore" which has no proper affinity with what precedes. The sentence is as follows: "Thus Dr. Briggs has misapprehended completely the teaching of the fathers, reformers, and Westminster divines regarding the truthfulness of the Bible."

Why say "thus" when we have had nothing furnished us by the prosecution as to the teaching of the fathers, reformers, and Westminster divines regarding the truthfulness of the Bible as depending upon the authorship of the Pentateuch and the Book of Isaiah? — and for the simple reason that there is nothing to furnish. The fathers, reformers, and

Westminster divines taught no such doctrine as the prosecution have attributed to them. Who has ever taught, until now, that the truthfulness of the Bible depends upon its human authorship?

Having failed to establish their charge, or any part of it, thus far, they come to their last and main reliance for proof, which is substantially contained in the first two sentences they utter regarding it, as follows: "But Christ and the writers of the New Testament give unqualified testimony to the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch. When speaking of 'the law,' 'the law of Moses,' 'the book of Moses,' and 'Moses' writings,' they used those terms in the accepted meaning of that time as referring to the entire Pentateuch."

But it will be observed that the second of these two sentences contradicts the first. "Christ and the writers of the New Testament" in speaking of "the law," "the law of Moses," "the book of Moses," and "Moses' writings," "used these terms in the accepted meaning of that time," and not as giving any "testimony to the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch." And the same thing was true of their references to "Isaiah." This review might close here, so far as the necessity for showing how utterly the prosecution have failed to make good their charge of heresy is concerned. But this review seeks to point out, not simply how strangely fallacious the positions of the prosecution are, but how directly opposed they are to those held by distinguished Presbyterian scholars, occupying, up to the time of their decease, the most important

positions as religious teachers at the very fountain-head of orthodoxy in America.

I have now the pleasure of quoting the teaching of another of my late revered Princeton professors, and of setting forth the fact that he did not believe that Moses was the author of the whole Pentateuch. Whatever may have been his views regarding the authorship of the other four books of the Pentateuch, or the book of Isaiah, he neither held nor taught that the book of Genesis was written by Moses. He taught, on the contrary, that it was *not*.

In a work which bears upon the titlepage of its first volume, "A Comparative History of Religions, by James C. Moffat, D.D., Professor in the Theological Seminary in Princeton. Part 1. Ancient Scriptures. New York. Dodd & Mead, 762 Broadway, 1873," twenty-eight pages, namely, from page 73 to page 101, of vol. i. are devoted to proving that Moses could not have been the author of the book of Genesis. Any reader will find those twenty-eight pages of intense interest from any point of view (as the whole scholarly work is); and by orthodox Presbyterian Bible students known to the present writer the argument they contain has been deemed conclusive and unanswerable. No attempt will be made here to reproduce the argument, but a few quotations may be taken from the pages to confirm what has been said above regarding the fallacy of the positions taken by the prosecution as to the authorship of Isaiah and the Pentateuch, and the truthfulness of the Bible.

Speaking of the Pentateuch, Dr. Moffat says (page 73) : —

“That the first of those books in its present form has not descended to us from the time in which any, even the latest of its events occurred, is capable of easy demonstration; and it is just as plain that it has undergone the process of modernization, receiving the explanation of old names from more recent names, and other additions from editorial hands at some date *subsequent to the conquest of Canaan.*”

On page 99 the author says : —

“Occasionally we find ancient names followed by the explanation in the more recent name, as if the editor had not felt free to modernize the whole so far as to leave out the old and substitute the new, but preferred to retain the old, appending the new by way of explanation. Thus, ‘Bela (the same is Zoar); ‘Kiriath Arba (the same is Hebron),’ etc.”

Speaking of the book of Genesis, on page 74, Dr. Moffat says : —

“It is substantially pre-Mosaic, and bears distinct internal marks of belonging to the same primitive, patriarchal style of society which gave birth to the earliest songs of the Veda and the Avesta.”

Then there follows a statement which all who hold the opinions of the prosecution regarding the views of Dr. Briggs would do well to ponder, — a series of statements rather, — as follows : —

“To the value of Scripture it no way imports who the original writer was. The authority of inspiration is of

equal weight without the sanction of a human name. Can it be determined who penned the Book of Job, or of Judges, or of Chronicles, or some of the most beautiful and affecting of the Psalms? And are those parts of Scripture of inferior weight because of that unsettled question? It is not the human authorship which confers the authority of inspiration; but, on the contrary, it is inspiration which gives his weight to any of the prophets, no matter what his name. The word of God bears its own stamp, and stands in no need of a voucher in any name of human renown. There is that in it and about it whereby it is as truly distinguished from a work of the human mind as a natural rose is distinguishable from an artificial one, or a natural landscape from one arrayed according to the laws of art. As the silent declaration of Deity rises from nature, so does it from revelation, self-sustained, and sustaining its defenders while borrowing nothing from them. Whether we know or do not know the name and genealogy of God's human instrument in the case is, in respect to Scriptural authority, a matter of very little moment. Where the name of the writer has been recorded, and we know about him in other connections, it is certainly gratifying to feel that we have a sort of personal acquaintance with one so favored of God; and yet it is undoubtedly not without design that the names of several Scripture writers have been withheld.

“The book of Genesis came down from antiquity to the Hebrew nation with their laws, and through the hands of the lawgiver, and was, therefore, very naturally by them classed under the same head; but the traditional classification is not entitled to forbid its full weight to the obvious fact that the book is anonymous. Yet anonymous as it is, no other portion of Scripture bears the marks of

Divine inspiration more legibly impressed upon it than the book of Genesis. . . . The question of its authorship is merely one of literary history; but under that head a question of no common interest. . . .

“The very latest event mentioned in Genesis had occurred, at the shortest estimate, more than half a century before Moses was born, and the rest of its human history covers a period extending to more than two thousand years of a prior antiquity, — the earlier parts of it standing in relation to Moses, chronologically, as the times of Homer and Hesiod and Thales stand to ours. It is clear that he could not have been the human author of such a history by any natural means.

“The book could have come to his hands in only one of four ways: either the whole was revealed to him supernaturally; or its materials came down to him on the stream of tradition; or they were kept in detached records — written monuments of one kind or another — from which he composed the work; or finally, the whole is an historical series, preserved in the usual historical way, and existing in its original historical integrity.”

By a thorough and scholarly examination of the whole subject Dr. Moffat reaches the following conclusions:—

“Whoever were the penmen of it, the book of Genesis was composed after the manner of all the rest of Scripture, by successive additions of book to book” (page 97).

“It is the collection in chronological order of the ancient books themselves, without further trace of editorial work than that of modernizing the diction and prefixing the conjunction in some cases, by way of linking the consecutive books together” (page 92).

“The primal epoch of revelation to which it pertains was separated from its successor by a long period of degeneracy; and a similar degeneracy intervened between the close of the revelations belonging to the Mosaic epoch and those which opened the Christian. In both these intervening periods the written Word kept the spirit of the Church alive” (page 97).

“In what we call the book of Genesis, then, we have the Bible of the patriarchal Church, — the Bible of the Church before Moses, containing literary productions from the earliest ages of our race, and the only extant historical authorities of the first two thousand years” (page 99).

In the course of his discussion of this most interesting question Dr. Moffat meets and easily disposes of the statement upon which the prosecution finally relied for proof of their charge that Dr. Briggs is guilty of heresy in teaching that Moses is not the author of the Pentateuch, nor Isaiah of half the book that bears his name. The reliance of the prosecution was upon the fact that Christ and the writers of the New Testament speak of “the law of Moses,” and quote from it in connection with the name of Moses, and from the book that bears Isaiah’s name as if it might all have been written by him. The principle in both these cases is the same, and has been fully explained by Dr. Moffat as follows: —

“In the gospel according to Luke, xxiv. 27, we find it said of the Saviour that, ‘beginning from Moses and from all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself,’ and hence might infer a final settlement of this question. Because, if

there are things concerning the Messiah in Genesis, as we are told there are, it must be comprehended under the name of Moses, from whom, together with all the prophets, He began His exposition. But in order to that conclusion we must show that the words 'Moses,' 'the prophets' and 'the Scriptures,' are designations of authorship, and not mere classification of the sacred books. Upon attempting, however, to make this point good, from parallel passages, and passages of direct reference or quotation, we find everything going to determine the opposite. In the forty-fourth verse of the same chapter of Luke, 'the law of Moses, the prophets, and the Psalms' is obviously a classification of the books of Old Testament Scripture. So in Matt. v. 17 ; vii. 12, and xxii. 40, and Luke xvi. 16 the law and the prophets are used as general terms comprehending all Scripture. In these last mentioned instances it is clear that the words 'law and the prophets' correspond respectively to 'Moses and the prophets' in the first. The name of Moses, as the writer of the law, is used in a sense synonymous with 'law,' according to a custom equally prevalent in our own language. And then either or both of them are used as terms whereby to designate a class of sacred books in which the law was the principal part. That group of books contained also history, poetry, and much else besides law, but the law was its great feature and furnished a convenient designation for the whole, which every Hebrew rightly understood when so used. It was not, however, always confined to the Pentateuch. Jesus Himself sometimes called the whole body of Old Testament Scripture the law (John x. 34 ; xv. 25). Sometimes the two heads, the law and the prophets, were used as comprehensive of the whole, and sometimes three classes were made, 'the law,' or 'Moses,' or 'the law of

Moses,' being the name given to the first, 'the prophets' designating the second, and 'the Psalms' the third. It is clear that these names, so far from determining authorship, do just the very opposite, by grouping together under the same head books of acknowledgedly different authors, and of dates separate by hundreds of years. Thus, as Job, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Solomon were classed with the Psalms, although certainly not Psalms, and Kings with the prophets though really historical, so Genesis was classed with the law of Moses, although not belonging to the law.

"Genesis being thus arranged under the general head of the law by the Jews, the Saviour, by adopting, confirmed the classification; but did not thereby affirm anything else than that the classification was a proper one; just as much, and no more, as he affirmed of the other heads by adopting them" (pp. 81-83).

The above argument by Dr. Moffat is precisely the line of argument pursued by Dr. Briggs, only that he applied it to Isaiah as well as to the Pentateuch.

At page 170 of his first volume of "Systematic Theology" Dr. Charles Hodge says, "The language of the Bible is the language of common life, and the language of common life is founded upon apparent and not upon scientific truth."

Dr. Briggs showed that Christ and the New Testament writers, using the language of common life spoke of the Pentateuch as "the law of Moses" or "Moses," and the book called the book of Isaiah as "Isaiah," just as we in common language call the book of Ruth "Ruth," or the book of Job "Job."

He also called attention to the fact that in the fourth chapter of "Hebrews" the inspired Word seems to speak of the book of Psalms under the name of "David" although it is well known that many of the Psalms were not written by David.

There is no doubt that many of the Jews, whose language Jesus used, understood it in some cases as meaning something more than Jesus understood it to mean. There were disputes among themselves over many literary and technical questions. But Jesus did not enter the arena of literary dispute with them, and correct all their minor errors. He had a greater work to do, and must leave many errors until the time of the dispensation of the Spirit, who, when He should come, would guide into all the truth. But now that we live in the dispensation of the Spirit, and He, by guiding His servants in their study of the Word of God, would correct every error, there are not a few who prefer to cling to the traditions of the fathers and reject the Spirit's teaching.

Our Confession teaches, chapter i., section x., that "the Supreme Judge, by which all controversies are to be determined, and all decrees of councils, opinions of ancient writers, doctrines of men, and private spirits are to be examined, and in whose sentence we are to rest, can be no other but the Holy Spirit speaking in the Scripture." But when a Christian scholar, who believes this doctrine, draws forth from the treasury of the Word things new and old for the correction of error and the building up of men in the most holy faith, there are some who up-

braid him in such language as the following: "Dr. Briggs says, 'Jesus was not bound to correct all the errors of His contemporaries.' Well, if that is true, then it is a great pity that Dr. Briggs did not follow so good an example, so as not to disturb the peace of a great church." Had Dr. Lampe remembered the words, "I came not to send peace, but a sword," or had he observed that his unhappy remark might be seen to have a more pointed application to the prosecution than to Dr. Briggs, he would probably not have allowed himself to utter it.

But what has become of the two quotations from the Confession of Faith which were the specifications by which the prosecution were to prove their charge? They have been captured by Dr. Briggs and turned directly against the prosecution.

"It is not sufficient," said Dr. Briggs, "for the prosecution to claim that a doctrine is an essential doctrine of the Westminster standards. They may claim anything and everything. It is necessary for them to prove their claim. The court have doubtless noticed that the prosecution have made no attempt in their argument to present such proof. They have made no use of these passages of our Confession whatever. On this account I ask you to rule charges four and five out of court as entirely destitute of proof. But I shall find it convenient to use these passages of the Confession myself, and turn them against the prosecutors. I admit that two doctrines of our standards are 'that the Holy Scripture evidences itself to be the Word of God by the consent of all its parts,' and 'The infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture is Scripture itself.'"

Dr. Briggs then took these two Confessional statements that had been relied upon by the prosecution to prove their charges, and showed that it was by making Scripture interpret itself, and by ascertaining "the consent of all its parts," that it had been found that Moses was not the author of the Pentateuch, nor Isaiah the author of half the book that bears his name. The tables were thus completely turned upon the prosecution. To use a classic phrase that was used in the court, they were "hoisted with their own petard." But the court did not so decide. Dr. Briggs then closed his argument on these two charges as follows:—

"Let me sum up my arguments on the charges four and five.

"1. There is no lawful bridge by which these specifications, 'that Moses is not the author of the Pentateuch, and that Isaiah is not the author of half of the book that bears his name,' can be brought under the charges. Therefore there is no relevancy in the specifications, — they cannot be accounted as valid.

"2. The Westminster Confession of Faith nowhere states that Moses wrote the Pentateuch, or that Isaiah wrote the whole of the book that bears his name. Therefore there can be no lawful case against me in the Presbyterian Church.

"3. The testimony of Holy Scripture in the passages adduced does not show that Moses wrote the Pentateuch and that Isaiah wrote the book that bears his name. Therefore my statements are not in conflict with Holy Scripture, and there is no valid case against me on the ground of Holy Scripture.

“4. Holy Scripture makes it evident that Moses did not write the Pentateuch, and that Isaiah did not write half of the book that bears his name. Therefore my statements are true, and the prosecution are in conflict with Holy Scripture.”

These two charges, which are thus seen to have absolutely no support from either the Scriptures or the Confession of Faith, were regarded by the prosecution as the gravest of all the charges they had framed. They seemed to be looked upon as the very key of their position. Here are the words with which Dr. Lampe, on behalf of the prosecution, closed his presentation of these charges:—

“This teaching is far more dangerous than affirming the Scripture to be in error in matters of minor importance; it tends to a total destruction of faith in the Bible. It has done that already for many. It is entirely at variance with the Confessional doctrine of the Holy Scripture.”

None of all the charges stirred individual commissioners as did these two. The only case, so far as the present writer can remember, in which any member of the court needed to be called to order during the trial was in connection with these charges. This was in the case of a lay commissioner who took an active part in all the proceedings, and whose opinions and utterances seemed to have weight with many in the court. In expressing his views on these charges he was deeply stirred, and with earnest

gesture and elevated voice began to relate an imaginary colloquy between Dr. Briggs and God, in which he represented "God Almighty" as declaring to Dr. Briggs that Moses wrote the Pentateuch, and Dr. Briggs as replying that Moses did not. But at this point he was called to order in the most quiet and considerate way by a venerable father in the Assembly, — the Rev. Dr. Storrs.

The respect that was entertained for the opinions of the commissioner referred to may be judged from the fact that at the opening of the Assembly he had been made a member of the judicial committee, and at the close of the trial he was made a member of the committee that was appointed to prepare the sentence to be passed upon Dr. Briggs.

It is possible that Dr. Briggs may not be correct in all his conclusions regarding the authorship of parts of the Pentateuch and parts of the book of Isaiah. He may have made mistakes, such as all students are liable at times to make, or such as any minister may sometimes make in his interpretation of the text from which he preaches; but that he has fallen into any vital error, or that he has cast any slight upon any part of the inspired Word, either in the course of his study or in the conclusions he has reached, is the reverse of what has been proved by all the records of the case.

Instead of aiming at weakening either Divine authority or man's loyalty thereto, all his teaching claims for its aim the promotion of a higher Chris-

tian life through a clearer comprehension of the full meaning of the inspired Word of God; or, to use his own language, through learning to see "the magnificent unity of the whole Bible, to capture all its sacred treasures, and to enjoy all its heavenly glories."

CHAPTER IX.

SIXTH CHARGE: PROGRESSIVE SANCTIFICATION AFTER
DEATH.

WE come now to the last of the six charges that were sustained by the General Assembly. It accuses Dr. Briggs of teaching the doctrine of progressive sanctification after death, and claims that this is heresy. There is nothing new about this doctrine except, perhaps, the name. With everything else that is essentially connected with it, every student of historical theology is familiar. It is a doctrine which has been held by many of the most saintly and orthodox divines for centuries. In fact, if we leave the *letter* of the doctrine out of view and take account only of its *spirit*, it is the doctrine held by all orthodox Christians. They do not believe that the soul either dies or sleeps; nor do they believe the patristic doctrine that between death and the resurrection "the soul is in a dreamy, semi-conscious state, neither happy nor miserable, awaiting the resurrection of the body." They do not believe that the soul enters "a state of suffering," "a purgatory," there to be cleansed from sin before it can enter heaven; nor, on the other hand, do Presbyterians believe that the souls of believers attain to

the highest blessedness in the state between death and the resurrection. They believe that at death believers pass into the immediate presence of the Lord Jesus, and that they are made perfect in holiness in the sense of being wholly freed from sin, but that some higher degree of blessedness awaits them after the resurrection of the body, and the final judgment. To use the language of the Westminster standards (Larger Catechism, Question 86), they believe that —

“The communion in glory with Christ, which the members of the invisible Church enjoy immediately after death, is in that their souls are then made perfect in holiness, and are received into the highest heavens, where they behold the face of God in light and glory, waiting for the full redemption of their bodies, which even in death continue united to Christ, and rest in their graves as in their beds till at the last day they be again united to their souls.”

The Presbyterian Church holds that after the resurrection and at the day of judgment believers shall enter upon a still more blessed state than this, as is stated in their standards (Larger Catechism, Question 90).

“At the day of judgment, the righteous, being caught up to Christ in the clouds, shall be set on His right hand, and there, openly acknowledged and acquitted, shall join with Him in the judging of reprobate angels and men, and shall be received into heaven, where they shall be fully and forever freed from all sin and misery, filled with inconceivable joys, made perfectly holy and happy

both in body and soul, in the company of innumerable saints and holy angels, but especially in the immediate vision and fruition of God the Father, of our Lord Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Spirit to all eternity. And this is the perfect and full communion which the members of the invisible Church shall enjoy with Christ in glory, at the resurrection and day of judgment.”

To all these orthodox doctrines Dr. Briggs subscribes. Whatever else he believes is not of such a nature as to prevent him from holding all these doctrines. Nor does it conflict with any of these doctrines. What he believes in addition to all that has just been formally stated is simply of an explanatory nature. He explains what the words “the souls of believers are at their death made perfect in holiness” should be taken to mean. He believes that the clauses of our standards, as quoted above, which speak of the communion in glory with Christ, which the members of the invisible Church enjoy *immediately after death* are parallel clauses, — clauses which make affirmation, “not of successive chronological events, but of parallel events: (1) ‘made perfect in holiness,’ (2) ‘received into the highest heavens,’ (3) ‘behold the face of God in light and glory,’ (4) ‘waiting for the full redemption of their bodies,’ — all alike referring to the communion in glory with Christ which continues through this entire state from death to the resurrection.”

He sees that being made perfect in holiness, according to this view, would not be one instantaneous act, but would go on through the whole period be-

tween death and the resurrection. In thus being a continuous process, he sees that it would resemble the process of sanctification as it is taught in the Word of God and set forth in the standards of the Church. He has, therefore, called it sanctification. He is confirmed in this view by observing that the standards teach that the communion in glory which the members of the invisible Church have with Christ pertains to three stages or states of existence, namely: "this life," "at death," or "immediately after death," and "at the resurrection and final judgment." He further observes that this communion is not, in other cases, limited to one instant of time, — that "in this life" means during this life from the moment of regeneration onward; that "at the resurrection and day of judgment" must mean beginning at the resurrection and day of judgment; and, therefore, that "at death," or "immediately after death," must mean beginning at, or immediately after, death. As elsewhere explained in his argument, Dr. Briggs understands this to mean that at the moment of death there will be "a transformation;" which he likens to "the springing forth of the blossom in the springtime after a long winter's secret preparation," "the springing of a new life." He adds this declaration; "I firmly believe that then [in the moment of death] there will be a transformation greater than any that is possible in this life." He says some may call this sanctification, — meaning perfect sanctification; they may call it being "made perfect in holiness;" but he regards this as a very meagre and

inadequate conception of the sanctification taught in the Holy Scriptures and the Westminster Confession. He quotes the language of the Confession to show that it is not merely cleansing from sin and rising to a higher grade of Christian life and experience, "it is being more and more strengthened in all Christian graces, to the practice of true holiness," and this requires duration; it is "sanctification throughout the whole man;" and the proof-text cited by the Confession in support of this doctrine is (1 Thess. v. 23): "And I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ," — thus showing that before sanctification can be perfect the resurrection body must have been received, and the second advent of Christ must have taken place. But it is unnecessary to review the whole argument by which Dr. Briggs supports his belief in the doctrine of progressive sanctification. All that is necessary is to show the position he holds, preparatory to showing that this position is not only not contrary to the teaching either of the Bible or the Confession, but is regarded by many saintly and orthodox divines as the proper interpretation of the Scriptures and the standards on this question; and it is also to be regarded as substantially *the* orthodox doctrine, judging by the opinions and teaching of the man whose volumes on Systematic Theology are commonly regarded, in America at least, as the best exposition of Presbyterian doctrine anywhere to be found.

Dr. Charles Hodge, in the third volume of his "Sys-

tematic Theology" (page 724), opens his discussion of the doctrine of the intermediate state as follows :

"As all Christians believe in the resurrection of the body and a future judgment, they all believe in an intermediate state. That is, they believe that there is a state of existence which intervenes between death and the resurrection; and that the condition of the departed during that interval is, in some respects, different from that which it is to be subsequent to that event. It is not, therefore, as to the fact of an intermediate state, but as to its nature, that diversity of opinion exists among Christians.

"The common Protestant doctrine on this subject is that 'the souls of believers are, at their death, made perfect in holiness, and do immediately pass into glory; and their bodies, being still united to Christ, do rest in their graves till the resurrection.' According to this view the intermediate state, so far as believers are concerned, is one of perfect freedom from sin and suffering, and of great exaltation and blessedness. This is perfectly consistent with the belief that after the second coming of Christ, and the resurrection of the dead, the state of the soul will be still more exalted and blessed."

This is by no means all that there is to be quoted from Dr. Hodge as representing his views on the question now under discussion. But before quoting further from his writings, I will relate an incident which occurred at Princeton somewhat more than twenty years ago. Two theological students, in discussing this very question, came upon a difficulty neither of them could settle to the satisfaction of the other. Their difficulty was, How are the souls of believers

made perfect in holiness at death? Is it by a mysterious operation of the Holy Spirit, like the act of regeneration, or is it by means of the Word in some form in accordance with Our Lord's intercessory prayer, "Sanctify them through Thy truth; Thy word is truth"? The two students agreed to refer the matter to the venerable Dr. Hodge; so at the close of the next lecture in his class-room they stepped forward to his desk. No sooner was the question propounded than the venerable teacher, with his gold spectacles resting above his brow, benevolence beaming on his strong yet tender countenance, and the simplicity of a child in his speech, answered, "Oh, bathe a soul in the light of heaven and it will become perfect in holiness in a very short time!" These were his exact words. They have often been related since, but I believe were never before put on record. Other words were spoken, but what they were is not remembered. But this much is certain: the tenor of them, together with the above utterance, led the present writer to conclude that the sanctification of believers when they pass into the presence of Christ is by means of THE WORD; that it is through beholding Jesus and enjoying His presence that we become "like Him." Is not this what was meant by being "bathed in the light of heaven?" "The Lamb is the Light thereof." What the now sainted theologian meant by "in a very short time" I do not profess to know. But I do know that I have heard him guarding us against reasoning about eternity as we would reason about time, — measuring out its hours as we measure the hours of one of earth's

days, forgetting that eternal duration is a subject we do not as yet understand, and that "one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." May it not be that all our reasoning about either the instantaneousness or progressiveness of being made perfect in holiness after death may only betray to celestial intelligences our ignorance of things unseen and eternal, at which we may at present "look," indeed, but concerning which we have been furnished with but few data out of which to manufacture logical syllogisms? The Westminster divines were no doubt wisely guided in so framing their statements of doctrine upon this question, which pertains rather to the heart and soul than to the head, that they may be understood variously. One child of God may take the statements of the Larger Catechism regarding the Communion which believers have with Christ at death to imply an instantaneous act of sanctification; another may take them to imply a progressive change "from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." It is an interesting fact in this connection that the first and second clauses in the answer of the question on this subject in the Shorter Catechism may be regarded as interchangeable. Instead of saying "The souls of believers are at their death made perfect in holiness, and do immediately pass into glory, and their bodies, being still united to Christ, do rest in their graves till the resurrection," the answer might have read: "The souls of believers at their death do immediately pass into glory and are made perfect in holiness, and their bodies, being still united

to Christ, do rest in their graves till the resurrection." If it be true that it is by being bathed in the light or glory of heaven that perfection in holiness comes, then the latter would be the more natural order. But, as we have already seen, this is not a subject upon which mortals may dogmatize. It is a question upon which orthodox leaders in all Protestant churches have always allowed great liberty of individual opinion, so long as no violence is done to positive statements in the Word of God — if there are any such statements bearing directly upon this doctrine. We know that for the believer to depart is to be with Christ; to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord; that the soul of the penitent thief went direct from the cross to Paradise. But, as Dr. Briggs has pointed out, only one proof-text is cited in support of the Confessional statement that the souls of believers are at their death made perfect in holiness, and even that one text is not a direct statement of the doctrine. In the opinion of many — and among them such divines and scholars as Calvin and De Wette — "the spirits of just men made perfect" spoken of in that text do not refer to the spirits of all believers immediately after death; so that the passage, in their opinion, teaches nothing regarding the doctrine now in question.

The boldness of the prosecution, in charging Dr. Briggs with heresy for holding the doctrine of progressive sanctification after death is striking when viewed in the light of the fact that John Calvin himself, after whom the Presbyterian system of doctrine takes its name, held that believers, in the interme-

mediate state between death and the resurrection, are "in the way of advancement." The attention of the Assembly was called to this fact by Dr. Briggs, who quoted Calvin's views as follows: —

"As, however, the Spirit is accustomed to speak in this manner in reference to the last coming of Christ, it were better to extend the advancement of the grace of Christ to the resurrection of the flesh. For, although those who have been freed from the mortal body do no longer contend with the lusts of the flesh, and are, as the expression is, beyond the reach of a single dart, yet there will be no absurdity in speaking of them as in the way of advancement, inasmuch as they have not yet reached the point at which they aspire; they do not yet enjoy the felicity and glory which they have hoped for; and, in fine, the day has not yet shone which is to discover the treasures which lie hid in hope. And, in truth, when hope is treated of our eyes must be directed forward to a blessed resurrection as the grand object in view." (Calvin on Phil. i. 6.)

It is not necessary to point out the various ways in which the prosecution have misunderstood language used in connection with this doctrine, as they misunderstood language used in connection with the foregoing doctrines; nor need I point out fallacies in their reasoning, and false inferences drawn by them from Dr. Briggs' statement of his views. I shall close the review of this sixth charge by showing that, in the opinion of so conspicuously orthodox a divine as the late Dr. Charles Hodge, the man who holds the views Dr. Briggs holds on this subject should not have his orthodoxy called in question.

By turning to the third volume of his "Systematic Theology," pp. 733-743, it will be found that in the opinion of Dr. Hodge even those who hold the patristic doctrine of the intermediate state, as it is commonly set forth in modern times, are in substantial agreement with the strictly orthodox view.

At one point in his argument Dr. Briggs said: "Let me read a single question that has been sent up to me: 'Do you mean by *middle state* a condition of being, between earth and heaven, or a condition of heavenly life between the death of the believer and the final judgment?'" Dr. Briggs' prompt reply to this question was: "I mean the latter."

Dr. Briggs, in common with Dr. Hodge and other orthodox theologians, holds that the "middle state" is not a different *place* from heaven and hell, but simply a state of existence in some respects different from that which will be more fully experienced after the resurrection and final judgment. In this he and other strictly orthodox theologians differ from those who hold the patristic view commonly known as the doctrine of "*the* intermediate state," as distinguished from the doctrine of *an* intermediate state, as held by the majority of Christians.

The patristic doctrine of "the intermediate state" is modelled after the old Jewish belief in Sheol. Speaking of the belief of the early Christians regarding this doctrine, Dr. Hodge says (Systematic Theology, pp. 738-739):—

"As many of the Jews therefore assumed that in Sheol there were two departments, Paradise and Gehenna, the

one the abode of the righteous, the other of the wicked, so the Christians, in many cases, made the same distinction with regard to the intermediate state; the souls of believers went to Paradise, the souls of the wicked into hell. And they often so exalted the blessedness of the former as to make it a mere dispute about words whether they went to heaven or into an intermediate state. The real controversy," adds Dr. Hodge, "so far as any exists, is not as to whether there is a state intermediate between death and the resurrection in which believers are less glorious and exalted than they are to be after the second advent of Christ, but what is the nature of that state."

Dr. Hodge then indicates what he means by the difference as to the nature of the state, by asking the questions: "Are believers after death with Christ? Do their souls immediately pass into glory? Or, are they in a dreamy, semi-conscious state, neither happy nor miserable, awaiting the resurrection of the body?" Dr. Briggs, in common with Dr. Hodge and other strictly orthodox theologians, answers the first and second of these questions in the affirmative, and the third in the negative.

But the opinion of Dr. Hodge as to the orthodoxy of Dr. Briggs' position on this subject may be learned still more definitely from his statements regarding the modern form of the doctrine of "the intermediate state" on pp. 741-743 of his "Systematic Theology," vol. iii., a few extracts from which may now be given as follows:—

"The common views on this subject are perhaps fairly represented in the elaborate work of the Honorable Archi-

bald Campbell, on 'The Doctrine of a Middle State between Death and the Resurrection' (London, 1721, p. 44). He thus sums up the points which he considers himself to have proved to be the doctrine of the Bible, of the Fathers, and of the Church of England: —

“ ‘First, that the souls of the dead do remain in an intermediate or middle state between death and the resurrection.’

“ ‘That the proper place appointed for the abode of the righteous during the interim between death and the resurrection, called Paradise or Abram’s bosom, is not the highest heavens where alone God is present, fully to be enjoyed, but it is, however, a very happy place, one of the lower apartments or mansions of heaven, a place of purification and improvement, of rest and refreshment, and of divine contemplation, — a place whence our Blessed Lord’s humanity is sometimes to be seen, though clouded or veiled if compared with the glory He is to appear with and be seen in at and after His second coming. Into which middle state and blessed place, as they are carried by the holy angels, whose happy fellowship they there enjoy, so afterward at the resurrection, after judgment, they are led into the beatific vision by the Captain of our salvation, Jesus Christ Himself, where they shall see Him fully as He is, and there they shall enjoy God for ever and ever, or sempiternally.’

“ ‘The souls of the wicked at death do not go into hell, but into a middle state, ‘which state is dark, dismal, and uncomfortable, without light, rest, or any manner of refreshment, without any company but that of devils and such impure souls as themselves to converse with, and where these miserable souls are in dismal apprehensions of the deserved wrath of God.’

“ ‘Secondly, That there is no immediate judgment after death, no trial on which sentence is pronounced, of neither the righteous nor the wicked, until Christ’s second coming.’ . . .

“ ‘Thirdly, That the righteous in their happy middle state do improve in holiness, and make advances in perfection, and yet they are not, for all that, carried out of that middle state into glory, or into the beatific vision, until after their resurrection.’ ”

(Campbell also held that prayers for the blessed dead “are acceptable to God as being fruits of our ardent charity, and are useful to them and to us.”)

“ ‘Lastly, That this doctrine of an intermediate state between death and the resurrection, as I have proved it, does effectually destroy the popish purgatory, invocation of the saints departed, popish penances, commutations of those penances, their indulgences, and treasures of merits purchased by supererogation.’ ”

Dr. Hodge also quotes the opinion of Jeremy Taylor, as follows: —

“ ‘Paradise is distinguished from the heaven of the blessed, being itself a receptacle of holy souls, made illustrious with visitation of angels, and happy by being a repository for such spirits, who at the day of judgment shall go forth into eternal glory.’ ”

“ Again he says: ‘I have now made it as evident as questions of this nature will bear, that in the state of separation the spirits of good men shall be blessed and happy souls; they have an antepast or taste of their reward; but their great reward itself, their crown of righteousness, shall not be yet; that shall not be until the day of judgment.’ ”

After making the above quotations from devout scholars who held, not the doctrine of an intermediate state held by Dr. Hodge and Dr. Briggs, but the doctrine of "*the* intermediate state" as a separate *place* in which there was held to be advancement in holiness, Dr. Hodge gives us his opinion of the little importance to be attached to the difference between even such views as these and those known as strictly orthodox views, in the following words:—

"It appears, therefore, that there is little difference between the advocates of an intermediate state and those who are regarded as rejecting that doctrine. Both admit, (1) that the souls of believers do at death pass into a state of blessedness; (2) that they remain in that state until the resurrection; (3) that at the second coming of Christ, when the souls of the righteous are to be clothed with their glorified bodies, they will be greatly exalted and raised to a higher state of being."

If this were Dr. Hodge's opinion regarding the modern form of the patristic doctrine, what would he have said had he been told that a scholarly Presbyterian professor was condemned as a heretic for teaching that neither the holiness nor the happiness of a believer is in the highest sense perfect immediately after death, but that there is growth in both until the resurrection of the body and the day of judgment. Judging from his views as recorded above, he would promptly have said: "It is a great mistake; he is in substantial agreement with all orthodox Christians."

What the belief of the prosecution is as to the condition of the souls of believers in the intermediate state between death and the resurrection is not at all clear from their arguments. Whether they believe that having become perfect in holiness at the moment of death, they are from that time onward perfect in happiness also, and as completely blessed as they will be after the resurrection, and that they thus live in an eternally conservative and unprogressive condition from the moment of death on through all eternity; or whether they believe that the souls of believers, having, in the moment of death, attained the goal of absolute perfection, live on in a dreamy, semi-conscious state of existence, waiting for the redemption of the body, we are not told. The latter would seem to be most in accord with their views. One member of the prosecution, Dr. Birch, is on record as saying: "All dead Christians are asleep. When we are asleep we show the rest which consists in the action of mind and body."¹ I cannot believe that Dr. Birch really holds the heretical doctrine of "the sleep of the soul," but it is quite possible that, if the views of the prosecution were accurately ascertained and formulated, they would be found to be a modified form of the old patristic doctrine of a dreamy, semi-conscious state, — a doctrine based upon the old Jewish doctrine. And why not? If the opinions of the Jews for over three thousand years be quoted by the prosecution in support of their view of the authorship of the Pentateuch, why should they not be allowed to quote the

¹ "Stenographer's Report," page 631.

opinion of the Jews for over three thousand years in support of their theory of the state of the soul between death and the resurrection? It is well that the whole of orthodox Christendom has always allowed great liberty of individual opinion upon this difficult question in eschatology.

CHAPTER X.

“THE REJECTED CHARGES”: MESSIANIC PROPHECY
AND SECOND PROBATION.

THE foregoing six charges were framed by the Prosecuting Committee prior to the meeting of the Portland Assembly in May, 1892. Having received permission at that assembly to amend the charges within certain limits, the committee took the liberty of adding two new charges, interjecting one between charges three and four, and the other between charges five and six, and changing the numbering of the charges accordingly, so that four and five of the original series became five and six of the amended series, and number six of the original charges became number eight of the amended list.

The former of these two new charges (number four of the amended series) alleges that Dr. Briggs teaches a doctrine “which is contrary to the essential doctrine of the Holy Scripture and of the standards of the Church, that God is true, omniscient, and unchangeable,” which the prosecution explain as follows: “In the fourth of the amended charges, Dr. Briggs is charged with teaching that many of the Old Testament predictions have been reversed by history, and that the great body of Messianic prediction cannot be fulfilled.”

The latter of the two new charges (number seven of the amended series) charges Dr. Briggs with teaching that "the processes of redemption extend to the world to come in the case of many who die in sin."

These two charges were rejected by the Presbytery of New York on two grounds: (1) because it was contrary both to the instructions of the Portland Assembly and the law of the Presbyterian Church, and not in the interests of justice to allow the committee to amend the charges in such a way as to change their general nature; and (2) Because both charges accused Dr. Briggs of holding doctrines which he utterly disavowed, and repudiated the idea of ever having taught. He had done this before the Presbytery of New York, in presence of the prosecuting committee, prior to the meeting of the Portland Assembly, as he stated to the Washington Assembly, as follows:

"In my response, November 4, 1891, I said, 'Specification seven alleges that Dr. Briggs teaches that predictive prophecy has been reversed by history, and that much of it has not been and never can be fulfilled.' This specification makes invalid inferences and against Christian courtesy, and an imputation upon my veracity which this Presbytery should not tolerate.

"Charge seven charges me 'with teaching that the processes of redemption extend to the world to come in the case of many who die in sin.' The prosecution impute this doctrine to me notwithstanding the disclaimer of such teaching which has been submitted to the Presbytery on two different occasions:—

“1. Dr. George Alexander laid before the Presbytery on October 5, 1891, without consultation with me, my answers to the following questions of the directors of the Union Theological Seminary: ‘Do you hold to what is commonly known as the doctrine of a future probation? Do you believe in purgatory?’ Answer — ‘No.’ ‘Do you believe that the issues of this life are final, and that a man who dies impenitent will have no further opportunity of salvation?’ Answer — ‘Yes.’

“2. In my response of November 4, 1891, I said: ‘If I had been charged with teaching second probation, or any probation whatever after death, I might have pointed to several of my writings in which this doctrine is distinctly disclaimed. If the doctrine of purgatory had been imputed, or regeneration after death, or transition after death from the state of the condemned to the state of the justified, any and all of those could be disproved by my writings.’ I ask the Presbytery, in view of these disclaimers, if it is just, if it is honorable, if it is in accordance with Christian courtesy and gentlemanly propriety for the prosecution to make such charges against me.”

When the question came up for discussion in the Washington Assembly, as to whether the Presbytery of New York was right in rejecting these two charges, the prosecution presented much, if not substantially all, of what they had to urge in support of the charges.

As the charges themselves were not tried either before the Presbytery or General Assembly, it would perhaps be improper for this review to enter fully upon the consideration of their merits. All that need be done is to show, from the arguments of the

prosecution in support of their appeal against the rejection of the charges, wherein they have fallen into error and wholly misunderstood the position of Dr. Briggs.

In the first place, they have misunderstood and misapplied his language in a way that seems unaccountable.

For example, in proof of their charge that Dr. Briggs teaches "that the processes of redemption extend to the world to come in the case of many who die in sin," the prosecution say, "'The processes of redemption,' he states, 'ever keep the race in mind. The Bible tells us of a race origin, a race ideal, and a race redemption.'" And they mean this to be taken as indicating that Dr. Briggs teaches Universalism or some such heresy.

Now the reader will observe that the prosecution seek to condemn Dr. Briggs here for stating a simple fact. The Bible in speaking of redemption does always keep the race in mind. It tells us that God sent not his Son into the world to condemn *the world*, but that *the world* through him might be saved; that Christ came not to judge *the world* but to save *the world*; that He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of *the whole world*; that as by one trespass the judgment came upon *all men* to condemnation, even so through one act of righteousness the free gift came unto *all men* unto justification of life.

Must Dr. Briggs and the Bible be charged with teaching either the doctrine of Universalism or the

doctrine of a second probation because of such statements ?

Dr. Briggs was showing that the teaching of the Bible warrants us in believing (as the greatest of orthodox divines have taught) that the number of the redeemed will ultimately be so vast, as compared with the number of the lost, that salvation will be seen to have extended to the whole race. The redeemed will not be a limited number selected from among the mass, but on the contrary, the redeemed will be the mass, — “ a great multitude which no man could number, out of every nation and out of all tribes and peoples and tongues,” — and the lost a limited number.¹

But what is our surprise to find that the prosecution see in Dr. Briggs' language a denial of the doctrine of election ! They say : “ According to Dr. Briggs, redemption is not limited by election. He says, ‘ The Bible does not teach universal salvation, but it does teach the salvation of the world, of the race of man, and that cannot be accomplished by the selection of a limited number of individuals from the mass.’ ”

¹ “ That the benefits of redemption shall far outweigh the evils of the fall, is here clearly asserted. This we can in a measure comprehend, because the number of the saved shall doubtless greatly exceed the number of the lost. Since the half of mankind die in infancy, and, according to the Protestant doctrine, are heirs of salvation ; and since in the future state of the Church the knowledge of the Lord is to cover the earth, we have reason to believe that the lost shall bear to the saved no greater proportion than the inmates of a prison do to the mass of the community.” (Dr. Charles Hodge's Commentary on Romans, chap. v. verse 21.)

Why did the prosecution not go on and quote Dr. Briggs' next sentence as part of their argument? It is as follows: "The holy arm that worketh salvation does not contract its hand in grasping only a few; it stretches its loving fingers so as to comprehend as many as possible, — *a definite number*, but multitudes that no one can number."

To place a Christian minister's ecclesiastical life in jeopardy by such a misreading and misuse of plain language is a grave mistake, which the prosecution themselves should be the first to hasten to correct.

The prosecution make a similar misapplication of the following language quoted from page 53 of the inaugural: "Another fault of Protestant theology is in its limitation of the processes of redemption to this world, and its neglect of those vast periods of time which have elapsed for most men in the middle state between death and the resurrection." They have interpreted this to mean that Dr. Briggs holds that men can be regenerated in the middle state, — a doctrine he distinctly disavows. Had they remembered that he was speaking, not of one act in the plan of redemption, but of the processes or progress of redemption in the case of those already regenerated, they might have avoided this mistake.

Another mistake into which the prosecution have fallen is that of disregarding the well-known principle of interpretation that when any statement made by a writer is obscure and there is a question about "the true and full sense" of it, its meaning is to be "searched and known by other places" in the writings

of that author, "which speak more clearly." The prosecution quote from page 56 of the inaugural a sentence which is somewhat obscure to them, and which they interpret as teaching that regeneration can take place after death. Had they remembered that in other places Dr. Briggs distinctly disavows this doctrine they would have decided otherwise. The sentence referred to is the following:—

"The salvation of the world can only mean the world as a whole, compared with which the unredeemed will be so few and insignificant, and evidently beyond the reach of redemption by their own act of rejecting it and hardening themselves against it, and by descending into such depths of demoniacal depravity in the middle state that they will vanish from the sight of the redeemed as altogether and unredeemably evil, and never more disturb the harmonies of the saints."

When read in the light of what Dr. Briggs teaches in other places, the key to the proper interpretation of the sentence is the word "evidently," which is equivalent to "will be seen to be;" and the meaning is not that they will place themselves beyond the reach of redemption by "descending into such depths of demoniacal depravity in the middle state, etc.," but that their "descending into such depths of demoniacal depravity," together with the fact of their having by their own act rejected salvation and hardened themselves against it, *will be seen* by the saints to be such an *evidence* or *proof* of their being altogether and unredeemably evil that they will finally "vanish from

the sight of the redeemed," and never more disturb their harmonies.

The prosecution, ignoring all that Dr. Briggs has plainly taught in other places, and as if bound to put, not the more favorable, but the less favorable construction upon his words, remark that "if Dr. Briggs does not teach in this passage that some men who die impenitent might have been redeemed in the middle state but for their 'descending to such depths of demoniacal depravity in the middle state,' then certainly when he tried to clothe his concept with language, he puts its clothes on upside down." It does not seem to have occurred to the prosecution that perhaps it was not the clothes of the sentence that were upside down, but that they were themselves mentally upside down while looking at the clothes.

The prosecution should have remembered that as far back as 1824 the Assembly announced the principle that "candor requires that a court should favor the accused by putting on his words the more favorable rather than the less favorable construction." (Moore's Digest, p. 224.)

The next mistake into which the prosecution have fallen is that of failing to observe the distinction between hypothetical statements and positive statements. When Dr. Briggs, writing as an apologist and inquirer after the truth upon a subject, raises and discusses questions that seem to have a bearing upon that subject, or discusses texts of Scripture that seem to throw light upon it, or for the sake of a thorough investigation of the subject assumes the possible cor-

rectness of doctrines which are commonly regarded as unsound, the prosecution charge him with holding and teaching every idea he has made use of in discussion in this way. Then they wonder what he means when he declares that he does not teach those ideas.

This applies to several of the false positions they charge him with holding under these two rejected charges as well as elsewhere. For example, when Dr. Briggs is referring to the scripture which declares that the unpardonable sin shall not be forgiven, neither in this life nor in the life to come, the prosecution quote his words as follows:—

“This raises the question whether any man is irretrievably lost ere he commits the unpardonable sin, and whether those who do not commit it in this world ere they die are, by the mere crisis of death, brought into an unpardonable state; and whether, when Jesus said that this sin against the Holy Spirit was unpardonable here and also hereafter, he did not imply that all other sins might be pardoned hereafter as well as here.”

It will be observed that Dr. Briggs has made no positive statement here, no declaration of his views, but has simply said that a certain passage of Scripture raises certain questions. But the prosecution class this with the other statements already given, which they have been shown to have misunderstood and misapplied, and say of it and of them, “These declarations are contrary to direct statements of Scripture,”—the first and most direct of which is

Prov. xi. 7: "When a wicked man dieth, his expectation shall perish, and the hope of unjust men perisheth."

The prosecution might have learned from one of Dr. Briggs' apologetic statements, quoted by themselves, that their charge against him of teaching that regeneration can take place in the middle state, is unfounded. They quote from page 220 of his work entitled "Whither," the following words: "The question which we have to determine as Calvinists is whether the divine act of regeneration may take place in the middle state." This statement, which is unfortunately severed from its context, proves that Dr. Briggs does not believe that it has yet been shown that the divine act of regeneration may take place in the middle state. He stated before the Assembly that he would be glad to teach this doctrine if it could be found in the Bible, but he could not find it there, and therefore could not teach it. This was a much stronger testimony against the doctrine of a second probation than could possibly be borne by any of those who have no care whatever regarding this matter. Is it an offence to cherish a willingness to teach any doctrine that can be proved to be a doctrine of the Bible? Would not the members of the Prosecuting Committee themselves be glad to preach the doctrine of a second probation if it were taught in the Word of God? Any man would who is not lacking in that charity which "hopeth all things."

What has been said of the failure on the part of the prosecution to distinguish between positive

statements and hypothetical or apologetic statements applies to their charge against Dr. Briggs of teaching the non-fulfilment of Old Testament predictions, and especially Messianic prophecy. In order to refute their arguments, all that was necessary was for Dr. Briggs to read his teaching on the subject from his well-known work on "Messianic Prophecy." Before reading from this work he said : —

"I have been teaching Messianic prophecy for twenty years to a thousand Christian ministers, who are now at work in all parts of the world. I wrote this work on 'Messianic Prophecy' after many years of teaching and careful revision of my lectures. This book has been translated into the Japanese language, and is now in use in several theological colleges in Japan. They see no error in it, and it has received the commendation of no less a man than William E. Gladstone, and the hearty approval of no less evangelical a man than Dr. Franz Delitsch of Leipsic."

Dr. Briggs then read at length from this work, and so completely did his quotations refute the charge his opponents had made against him regarding the non-fulfilment of Messianic prophecy that somewhat of a sensation was caused in the court. When the book was produced, a member of the court asked the question, "When was that book written?" It proved to have been written in 1886. After the reading of the quotations from it, Dr. Briggs was interrupted by another member of the court, as follows : —

"We have listened to what Dr. Briggs has said on that subject, and I should like to ask him a question.

That book was written in 1886, and I should like to ask if that is the opinion of Dr. Briggs at this time? Does he subscribe to the same opinion now?"

"Certainly, I do," said Dr. Briggs. "That book I use as a text-book in the Union Theological Seminary, where it has been used continuously ever since it was written. Every senior class goes over it every year. I have not changed a particle."

The member of the Judicial Committee referred to in a former chapter as feeling so deeply in regard to the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch was the next questioner. He said: "Before Dr. Briggs sits down, in justice to him and my own mind, — I did not interrupt him in the course of his argument, — I would like to ask him if, in his book on Messianic Prophecy, which I have never read, from pages 4 to 45 he makes the statement that 'the essential ideals of predictive prophecy are fulfilled.' Is that the position? That is all I desire to ask." Here the moderator indicated that there was no time just then for the asking and answering of questions, as the hour of adjournment had come. So Dr. Briggs replied to the above question by simply saying, "I read over the appeal. The brother can read it after the meeting."

The questioner was not satisfied with this answer, and said: "What I want to ask through you, Mr. Moderator, is, whether Dr. Briggs gives a definition of what is essential and what is ideal as to what is to be fulfilled in predictive prophecy. That is my first question."

“Yes, I did give a definition,” said Dr. Briggs, “and I will read it over again if you wish.”

In reply the questioner said: “I would like him to read and state what is the distinction between essential and non-essential?”

Dr. Briggs replied, “I shall have to read the whole chapter. Mr. McDougall can have the book if he wishes it.”

The discussion was finally closed with this statement by Dr. Briggs in answer to another questioner: “I have shown in my ‘Messianic Prophecy,’ that the great body of Messianic prediction had been, or will be, in the mediatorial reign or second advent of our Lord, fulfilled in history.”

This was seen to be a direct refutation of the charge in question, which was that he taught “that the great body of Messianic prediction cannot be fulfilled.”

As these two “rejected charges” had not been retained as part of the indictment on which Dr. Briggs was tried by the Presbytery of New York, it was not competent for the General Assembly, the Supreme Court of the church, to put him on trial upon them. All that the Assembly could do was either to approve the Presbytery’s action in rejecting them or to say that the Presbytery had erred in rejecting the charges, and remit them to the Presbytery for trial. Had the majority of the Assembly seen fit to take the latter of these two courses Dr. Briggs might have appeared again before his Presbytery and had the satisfaction of fully defending his views on these two

questions, and of knowing how they were regarded by his brethren who stood nearest to him ecclesiastically. The majority of the Assembly did not see fit, however, to take this course, nor did they sustain the Presbytery of New York in rejecting the charges. On the contrary they decided that the presbytery had erred in rejecting them, but left the charges untried. The *moral* effect of this action of the majority will no doubt be to convey the impression to the Church and the world that Dr. Briggs was adjudged guilty on these two charges as well as on all the other six.

Is there any precedent for a superior or supreme court deciding that charges which had been rejected by a lower court should not have been rejected,—in other words, that they should have been tried,—and then leaving these charges hanging over the accused untried? Did not the Assembly, by condemning the action of the presbytery in not trying the charges, virtually at the same time condemn its own action in entertaining those charges and yet not ordering them to be tried? And does not this anomalous action of the Assembly give weight to the unfortunate impression made upon the minds of many, that the object of the prosecution in the case of Dr. Briggs was not to ascertain the exact nature of the guilt or innocence of the accused, but to secure his conviction; and that when charges enough had been sustained to warrant his suspension from the ministry, the court manifested indifference as to the two additional charges preferred against him, although these charges

were of a very grave nature, both as affecting the accused himself and the purity of doctrine in the Church at large? Is not this one of the errors into which the court inadvertently fell in its haste to pacify the majority of the Church by condemning one whom they believed to be guilty of heresy?

CHAPTER XI.

DECISIONS AND PROTESTS.

THAT the reader may have before him a brief view of the case as a whole, there will be given in this chapter a few essential facts connected with its initiation in the Presbytery of New York, and its transference from the Presbytery to the General Assembly, together with the full text of the decisions of the Presbytery and General Assembly thereupon, and also the protests which followed the action of the Washington Assembly.

It was on the occasion of his inauguration as Professor of Biblical Theology in Union Theological Seminary, N. Y., on the 20th of January, 1891 (his chair formerly having been that of Professor of Hebrew and Cognate Languages), that Dr. Briggs delivered the inaugural address upon which all the charges preferred against him were based.

On the 13th day of April, A. D. 1891, the Presbytery of New York appointed a committee to consider the inaugural address of the Rev. Charles A. Briggs, D. D., in its relation to the Confession of Faith, and on May 11, A. D. 1891, the committee presented to presbytery a report, which was accepted, and its recommendation, "that the presbytery enter at once

upon the judicial investigation of the case," was adopted by the presbytery, and thereupon it was —

“Resolved, That a committee be appointed to arrange and prepare the necessary proceedings appropriate in the case of Dr. Briggs.”

The Rev. G. W. F. Birch, D. D., Rev. Joseph J. Lampe, D. D., Rev. Robert F. Sample, D. D., and Ruling Elders John J. Stevenson and John J. McCook were appointed such committee in conformity with the provisions of section 11 of the Book of Discipline.

At the meeting of presbytery, held on the 5th day of October, A. D. 1891, the Prosecuting Committee presented charges and specifications in the case, which were read in the presence of the judicatory, and were then served by the moderator upon the Rev. Charles A. Briggs, D. D., together with a citation, citing him to appear and plead to the said charges and specifications at a meeting of the presbytery, to be held on November 4, A. D. 1891.

On November 4, A. D. 1891, the presbytery, after fully hearing Dr. Briggs' "Response to the Charges and specifications," upon the motion of the Rev. Henry Van Dyke, D. D., made and entered on its records its decision and final judgment dismissing the case in the following words, to wit: —

“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.”

From this action of the Presbytery of New York, in dismissing the case, the Prosecuting Committee took an appeal in the name and on behalf of the Presbyterian Church to the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America.

This appeal came before the General Assembly at Portland, Oregon, in May, 1892, and after the hearing of the case the Assembly decided as follows: —

“The General Assembly having, on the 28th day of May; 1892, duly sustained all the specifications of error alleged and set forth in the appeal and specifications in this case, —

“It is now, May 30, 1892, ordered that the judgment of the Presbytery of New York, entered November 4, 1891, dismissing the case of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America against Rev. Charles A. Briggs, D. D., be, and the same is hereby reversed, and the case is remanded to the Presbytery of New York for a new trial, with directions to the said presbytery to proceed to pass upon and determine the sufficiency of the charges and specifications in form and legal effect, and to permit the Prosecuting Committee to amend the specifications or charges, not changing the general nature of the

same, if, in the furtherance of justice, it be necessary to amend, so that the case may be brought to issue and tried on the merits thereof as speedily as may be practicable.”

The action of the Presbytery of New York in compliance with this decision of the Portland Assembly is set forth in the following report:—

On the ninth day of January, 1893, a committee consisting of the Rev. George Alexander, D. D., the Rev. Henry Van Dyke, D. D., and Elder Robert Jaffray, appointed to bring in a minute to express the action of the said judicatory, made its report, which was adopted by the judicatory, and the said presbytery, sitting in a judicial capacity, made and entered its decision and final judgment in this case, in the following words, to wit:—

“The case of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America against the Rev. Charles A. Briggs, D. D., having been dismissed by the Presbytery of New York on November 4, 1891, was remanded by the general assembly of 1892 to the same presbytery, with instructions that ‘it be brought to issue and tried on the merits thereof as speedily as possible.’”

“In obedience to this mandate, the Presbytery of New York has tried the case. It has listened to the evidence and argument of the committee of prosecution, acting in fidelity to the duty committed to them. It has heard the defence and evidence of the Rev. Charles A. Briggs, presented in accordance with the rights secured to every minister of the church.

“The presbytery has kept in mind these established principles of our polity: that ‘no man can rightly be convicted of heresy by inference or implication;’ that ‘in the

interpretation of ambiguous expressions candor requires that a court should favor the accused by putting upon his words the more favorable rather than the less favorable construction; and that 'there are truths and forms with respect to which men of good character may differ.'

"Giving due consideration to the defendant's explanation of the language used in his inaugural address, accepting his frank and full disclaimer of the interpretation which has been put upon some of its phrases and illustrations, crediting his affirmations of loyalty to the standards of the church and to the Holy Scriptures as the only infallible rule of faith and practice, the presbytery does not find that he has transgressed the limits of liberty allowed under our constitution to scholarship and opinion.

"Therefore, without expressing approval of the critical or theological views embodied in the inaugural address or the manner in which they have been expressed and illustrated, the presbytery pronounces the Rev. Charles A. Briggs, D. D., fully acquitted of the offences alleged against him, the several charges and specifications accepted for probation having been 'not sustained' by the following vote. [See next page.]

"Accordingly, the presbytery, making full recognition of the ability, sincerity, and patience with which the committee of prosecution has performed the onerous duty assigned it, does now, to the extent of its constitutional power, relieve said committee from further responsibility in connection with this case. In so doing the presbytery is not undertaking to decide how far that committee is subject to the authority of the body appointing it, but intends by this action to express an earnest conviction that the grave issues involved in this case will be more wisely and justly determined by calm investigation and

		Sustained.			Not Sustained		
		Minis- ters.	Elders	Total	Minis- ters.	Elders	Total
I.	{ 1. Specification .	41	17	58	55	15	70
	{ 2. Specification .	42	17	59	54	15	69
	{ Charge { a . .	42	17	59	54	15	69
	{ Charge { b . .	42	17	59	54	15	69
II.	{ 1. Specification .	39	16	55	56	16	72
	{ 2. Specification .	39	16	55	56	16	72
	{ Charge { a . .	39	16	55	56	16	72
	{ Charge { b . .	39	16	55	56	16	72
III.	{ Specification . .	44	17	61	52	15	67
	{ Charge { a . .	44	17	61	52	15	67
	{ Charge { b . .	42	17	59	54	15	69
	{ Charge { c . .	44	17	61	52	15	67
IV.	{ Specification . .	39	15	54	55	17	72
	{ Charge { a . .	39	15	54	55	17	72
	{ Charge { b . .	39	15	54	55	17	72
V.	{ Specification . .	35	14	49	57	16	73
	{ Charge { a . .	35	14	49	57	16	73
	{ Charge { b . .	35	14	49	57	16	73
VI.	{ Specification . .	41	16	57	55	14	69
	{ Charge	41	16	57	55	14	69

fraternal discussion than by judicial arraignment and process.

“In view of the present disquietude in the Presbyterian Church and of the obligation resting upon all Christians to walk in charity and to have tender concern for the consciences of their brethren, the presbytery earnestly counsels its members to avoid on the one hand hasty or overconfident statement of private opinion on points concerning which profound and reverent students of God’s Word are not yet agreed, and, on the other hand, suspicions and

charges of false teaching which are not clearly capable of proof.

“Moreover, the presbytery advises and exhorts all subject to its authority to regard the many and great things in which we agree rather than the few and minor things in which we differ; and, turning from the paths of controversy, to devote their energies to the great and urgent work of the Church, which is the proclamation of the gospel and the edifying of the body of Christ.”

It was from this verdict of acquittal by the Presbytery of New York that the Prosecuting Committee appealed to the Washington Assembly, with the result set forth in the pages of this review.

After the final vote had been taken in the Assembly, which resulted in the appeal against the decision of acquittal by the Presbytery of New York being sustained by a vote of 383 to 116, a committee of fifteen was appointed, with the Rev. Dr. Hoyt, of Philadelphia, chairman, “to bring in an explanatory minute” and report what “action should be taken with reference to what should be done with the inferior judicatory.”

Before the report of this committee was read, the Rev. Geo. D. Baker, D. D., was asked by Dr. Hoyt to make a statement on behalf of a sub-committee which had been sent to interview Dr. Briggs, “and give him an opportunity to say whatever he might be pleased to say in view of the distressing circumstances.”

“Our interview,” said Dr. Baker, “was frank, kind, and cordial to the last degree; but Dr. Briggs insisted strenuously, positively, irrevocably, upon every-

thing that he had said in the defence which he made when brought to the bar of this court. At my request he gave into my hands this statement in his own handwriting, which I will read : —

“In accordance with your request, I hereby state that your committee called upon me to ask me if I had anything to say to them respecting the disposition of the case. I thereupon said that I adhered to all the positions taken before the General Assembly, and had nothing further to say; save that the appellee reserves all rights, and that the General Assembly should take the exclusive responsibility for any further action.”

Dr. Hoyt read the following, which was afterwards adopted as the judgment of the Assembly in the case : —

“General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, in session at Washington, District of Columbia, June 1, 1893.

“Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, appellant, *vs.* Rev. Charles A. Briggs, D. D., appellee.

“On appeal from the final judgment of the Presbytery of New York.

“This appeal being regularly issued and coming on to be heard on the judgment, the notice of appeal, the appeal, and the specifications of error alleged, and the record in the case from the beginning, the reading thereof having been omitted by consent, and the parties hereto having been heard before the judicatory in argument, and the opportunity having been given to the members of the judicatory appealed from to be heard, and they having been heard, and opportunity having been given to the

members of this judicatory to be heard, and they having been heard, as provided by the Book of Discipline, and the General Assembly, as a judicatory, sitting in said case on appeal, having sustained the following specifications of errors, to wit: all of said specifications of errors set forth in said five grounds of appeal, save and except the first and fifth specification under the fourth ground of appeal —

“On consideration whereof this judicatory finds said appeal should be and is hereby sustained, and that said Presbytery of New York, the judicatory appealed from, erred in striking out said amended charges 4 and 7, and erred in not sustaining on the law and the evidence said amended charges 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, and 8.

“On consideration whereof, this judicatory finds that said final judgment of the Presbytery of New York is erroneous, and should be and is hereby reversed.

“And this General Assembly, sitting as a judicatory in said cause, coming now to enter judgment on said amended charges 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, and 8, finds that the said Charles A. Briggs has uttered, taught, and propagated views, doctrines, and teachings as set forth in said charges contrary to the essential doctrine of Holy Scripture and the standards of the said Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, and in violation of the ordination vow of said appellee, which said erroneous teachings, views, and doctrines strike at the vitals of religion, and have been industriously spread; wherefore this General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, sitting as a judicatory in this cause on appeal, does hereby suspend Charles A. Briggs, the said appellee, from the office of a minister in the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America until such time as he shall give satisfactory evidence of repentance to the

General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America of the violation by him of the said ordination vow, as herein and heretofore found: and it is ordered that the stated clerk of this General Assembly transmit a certified copy of this judgment to the Presbytery of New York, to be made a part of the record in this case."

"Mr. Moderator, in addition to this report of judgment, there were also formulated by us in obedience to your commands doctrinal statements bearing upon the issues which have been pending here, and with your permission I will ask that Rev. Dr. Harsha, the chairman of the sub-committee, read that paper."

Rev. Dr. HARSHA. — The report, Mr. Moderator, of this sub-committee is a very brief one. We did not deem it advisable to go into large details on the doctrinal points raised in this appeal.

"Your committee, to whom was intrusted the duty of formulating a deliverance of this Assembly on the doctrinal points involved in the appeal of the committee of prosecution from the decision of the Presbytery of New York in the case of Charles A. Briggs, D. D., reports as follows:

"1. We find that the doctrine of the errancy of Scripture, as it came from them to whom and through whom God originally communicated His revelation, is in conflict with the statements of the Holy Scripture itself, which asserts that all scripture, or every scripture, is given by the inspiration of God (2 Timothy iii. 16); that the prophecy came not of old by the will of man, but that holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost (2 Peter i. 21); and also with the statements of the standards of

the church which assert, that the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the Word of God (Larger Catechism, question 3), of infallible Truth and Divine Authority (Confession, chapter i. section v.).

“2. We find in this case involved the question of the sufficiency of the human Reason and of the Church, as authorized guides in the matter of salvation. Your committee recommends that this General Assembly declare that the Reason and the Church are not to be regarded as fountains of Divine Authority; that they are unreliable and variable, and whilst they may be, and no doubt are, channels or media through which the Holy Spirit may reach and influence for good the human soul, they are not to be relied upon as sufficient in themselves, and aside from Holy Scripture, to lead the soul to a saving knowledge of God. To teach otherwise is most dangerous, and contrary to the Word of God and our standards, and our ministers and churches are solemnly warned against them.

“3. We find involved in this case a speculation in regard to the process of the soul’s sanctification after death which in the judgment of this Assembly is a dangerous hypothesis, in direct conflict with the plain teachings of the Divine Word and the utterances of the standards of our church. Those standards distinctly declare that the souls of believers are at their death made perfect in holiness and do immediately pass into glory, whilst their bodies, being still united to Christ, do rest in their graves till the resurrection. (Shorter Catechism, question 37; Cor. v. 3; Phil. i. 23; and John xvii. 24.)”

Against the foregoing judgment of the Assembly, and a declaration by the Assembly that the original manuscripts of the Bible were without error, protests,

which were largely signed, were submitted by Rev. Dr. Sprague, of Auburn, and Rev. Dr. Herrick Johnson, of Chicago, respectively.

The following is the protest presented by Dr. Sprague, of Auburn, in regard to the sentence against Dr. Briggs:—

“We, the undersigned, ministers and elders in the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, declare our hearty belief in, and love for, the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, and our entire loyalty to the principles of the Presbyterian Church, and desire respectfully to record our solemn protest against the verdict and suspension, and the proceedings leading to the verdict, of the case against the Rev. Charles A. Briggs, D. D., in the General Assembly of 1893—

“1. As involving, in our judgment, acts of doubtful constitutionality.

“2. As seeming to abridge the liberty of opinion hitherto enjoyed under our standards by office-bearers in the church.

“3. Tending, we believe, to the discouragement of the thorough study of the Bible, and reverent advance in apprehension of divine truth; and—

“4. As inflicting what we cannot but feel is an injustice on a Christian scholar of acknowledged high character and learning, as well as on the Presbytery of New York, which has fully acquitted him of the charges alleged against him.”

The resolution offered by Dr. Herrick Johnson, in behalf of himself and others, was as follows:—

“The undersigned enter respectful and earnest protest against the action of the Assembly which declares the

inerrancy of the original autographs of Scripture to be the faith of the church.

“We protest against this action —

“1. Because it is insisting upon a certain theory of inspiration, when our standards have hitherto only emphasized the fact of inspiration. So far as the original manuscript came from God, undoubtedly it was without error. But we have no means of determining how far God controlled the penmen in transcribing from documents matters purely circumstantial.

“2. Because it is dogmatizing on a matter of which necessarily we have no positive knowledge.

“3. Because it is insisting upon an interpretation of our standards which they never have borne, and which on their face is impossible. No man in subscribing to his belief in the Scripture as the Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice, has his mind on the ‘original autographs.’

“4. Because it is getting up an imaginary Bible as a test of orthodoxy. If an inerrant original Bible is vital to faith, we cannot escape the conclusion that an inerrant present Bible is vital to faith.

“5. Because it is disparaging the Bible we have and endangering its authority, under the pressure of a prevalent hostile criticism. It seems like flying for shelter to an original autograph, when the Bible we have in our hands to-day is an impregnable defence.

“Believing the present Scripture to be ‘the very Word of God,’ and ‘immediately inspired by God,’ ‘kept pure in all ages,’ and ‘our only infallible rule of faith and practice,’ notwithstanding some apparent discrepancies in matters purely circumstantial, we earnestly protest against the thrusting of this new interpretation of our standards

upon the church to bind men's consciences by enforced subscription to its terms."

To this protest the committee appointed to prepare an answer recommended the adoption of the following, and its report was accepted:—

"The committee appointed to prepare an answer to the protest of Dr. Herrick Johnson, Dr. S. J. Niccolls, and others, recommend the adoption of the following:—

"As already announced by this General Assembly, the deliverance of the Portland Assembly, and the deliverances of this body, touching the inspiration of the Holy Scriptures, impose no new test of orthodoxy, nor do they set forth any theory of inspiration, but only reaffirm the statement of our Confession of Faith, chapter i. sections 2, 4, 5, 8, and 10, the Larger Catechism question 3,—statements to which every minister and every elder in the church gives his assent at his ordination in response to the following question: 'Do you believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the Word of God, and only infallible rule of faith and practice?'

"We can, therefore, say with the protestants, we believe 'these present Scriptures to be the very word of God,' and 'immediately inspired by God,' 'kept pure in all ages,' and our only 'infallible rule of faith and practice,' while if errors were found in the original autographs they could not have proceeded from 'God, who is truth itself, the author thereof.'

E. D. WARFIELD, *Chairman.*"

It may be noted here that the Assembly passed a resolution also expressive of its disapproval of the action of the directors of Union Theological Seminary

in standing by Dr. Briggs, retaining him as a teacher, and rescinding their resolution of 1870, which provided that all appointments of professors "shall be reported to the General Assembly, and no such appointment of professor shall be considered as a complete election if disapproved by a majority of the Assembly." The rescinding of this resolution had been voted for by nineteen of the twenty directors, only one of the twenty directors being opposed to it.

The fact that those who stood nearest to Dr. Briggs, and were presumably best acquainted with him and his views, stood by him in the face of whatever sacrifice it might cost them, might have been regarded as an indication that those who were gathered together from far and near, and who were not intimately acquainted with Dr. Briggs and his teaching, had misunderstood the man and misinterpreted his views. But the Assembly did not so judge; but, on the contrary, condemned the action of the directors of the Union Theological Seminary by adopting the following recommendations of its committee on Theological Seminaries:—

“ Because, then, of the strange and unwarranted action of the directors in retaining Dr. Briggs after his appointment had been disapproved by the Assembly; and because of the refusal by the directors to arbitrate the single point in dispute between the Assembly and the board; and because of the attempt of the board on its own motion, and against the expressed desire of the Assembly to abrogate the compact of 1870, the Assembly disavows all responsi-

bility for the teaching of Union Seminary, and declines to receive any report from its board until satisfactory relations are established. The Assembly, however, cherishes the hope, and will cordially welcome any effort to bring Union Seminary into such a relationship with itself as will enable the Assembly to commend the institution again to students for the ministry.

“Your committee would further recommend that the board of education be enjoined to give aid to such students only as may be in attendance upon seminaries approved by the Assembly.

“Your committee would also recommend that the reelection of the Rev. Charles A. Briggs by the Presbytery of New York as a director of the German Theological Seminary at Bloomfield, N. J., be disaffirmed by this Assembly.”

The following explanatory remarks by Prof. Francis Brown, D.D., should be added:—

“Mr. Moderator and brethren, there is no member of the board of directors of Union Seminary on the floor of this house. Therefore, although I am a member of the faculty, and, as such, responsible only to the board of directors for instruction in a certain department, I may be pardoned, as standing here in some sense for the seminary, for saying a few words.

“I desire not to introduce personal elements into this discussion. Although, at the outset I may be permitted to say, now that the judicial case is substantially closed, that in refraining from personal elements in the discussion at the present time I do so without prejudice to my warm affection, high esteem, and confidence in my revered

teacher, colleague, and friend, who has been so prominently before you during the past few days.

“With reference to the action proposed by this assembly concerning Union Seminary, I have no objection to offer. If this assembly desires to take such action, or esteems it to be just and wise, no difficulty will be thrown in its way by any word that I shall speak. Union Seminary is not here pleading for anything from this assembly, either recognition or indorsement, either the receipts of these reports or the recommendation of students who may be sent to it to the board of education. These matters must be decided by authorities other than those of Union Seminary.

“The case is simply this: Union Seminary was founded as an independent seminary upon its own charter, owing ecclesiastical allegiance as an institution to no body whatever. It continued in the exercise of its rights under its charter, without any ecclesiastical connection whatsoever, for thirty-four years. At the end of that time it entered into an agreement with the General Assembly of the united church with certain provisions. Twenty-one years later it conceived that those provisions had not been carried out on the part of the General Assembly, and, recognizing fully the intention of the Assembly to abide by the agreement, it nevertheless felt that its chartered and constitutional rights had been infringed, and that, without surrendering a part of those chartered and constitutional rights and proving in this way false to the trust which the charter and the constitution imposed on the board, it could not acquiesce in the action of the Assembly of 1891. There is no spirit of revolt or rebellion behind this action, but a serious, earnest, profound desire to be faithful to obligations assumed in the sight of God and men, and to do

without fear or favor what conscience dictated in obedience to those obligations.

“Please understand that I am not apologizing for the board of directors of Union Seminary, and that I am not putting in any plea for the mitigation of judgment. Nothing is further from my desire. I simply desired to make it plain to you, if I could, that from their point of view the directors of the seminary have acted in a straightforward, consistent, honorable, and faithful manner with reference to the interests of that seminary which were legally committed to them, and to them alone.”

One of the incidental circumstances emphasized by the prosecution and that had weight with many members of the Assembly in deciding them to vote for the condemnation of the views of Dr. Briggs was the fact that the Presbytery of New York, in acquitting him of heresy, seemed to them to condemn his views. The language referred to in the Presbytery's decision is as follows:—

“Therefore, without expressing approval of the critical or theological views embodied in the inaugural address, or the manner in which they have been expressed and illustrated, the presbytery pronounces the Rev. Charles A. Briggs, D.D., fully acquitted of the offences alleged against him.”

A little reflection will satisfy any one that this language of the presbytery did not necessarily imply any condemnation of Dr. Briggs' views. There were other considerations besides the soundness or unsoundness

of the views in question, which made it prudent for the presbytery to express no approval of them.

The views in question were in some instances extra-Confessional; nothing had been formulated in the Westminster standards regarding them, — as for example, in the case of the authorship of the Pentateuch, and the book of Isaiah. This being so, the presbytery would have been out of its sphere had it expressed approval of them. It may be questioned if even a General Assembly could properly assume such a prerogative. It is not by vote of any single church court, but by the conjoint action of presbyteries, that doctrines can be formulated as doctrines of the church.

Then there are many views which an orthodox minister may hold and teach, which come in conflict with no doctrine taught in the Word of God, or formulated in the standards of the church, but which other Presbyterian ministers, whether in their individual capacity or acting as members of a church court, would be unwilling to endorse.

Suppose that a minister is charged with heresy for holding and teaching "free trade" views. When his brethren come to examine his views, they will find nothing in either the Word of God or the standards of the Presbyterian Church, with which his teaching is in conflict. They will accordingly pronounce him fully acquitted of the charge of heresy, but they will be careful to insert the clause, "without expressing approval of the views in question."

Probably the reason which influenced some of the

members of the Presbytery of New York to express no approval of the views for which Dr. Briggs had been put on trial was because they felt that they had not given the views in question sufficient study. They understood them well enough to see that they were not in conflict with any vital doctrine, but had not mastered them so completely as to make them part of their own thinking,—their own independent belief. All must see that under such circumstances it would have been unwise for intelligent and independent men to as much as let it be thought that they expressed their personal approval of the views in question.

If it be claimed that the members of the court of the presbytery could not intelligently acquit Dr. Briggs, and declare that his views were not in conflict with any vital doctrine, if they did not so master his views as to make them part of their own thinking, then may it also be claimed that the members of the Supreme Court of the church could not intelligently condemn Dr. Briggs and declare that his views were in conflict with vital doctrine, if they did not so master them as to make them part of their own thinking. And who will claim that the views of Dr. Briggs were thus mastered by the majority of the ministers and ruling elders in the assembly, in the brief time, and under the peculiar circumstances, in which they were considered?

In any case, if the deliverance of a general assembly in a heresy trial were simply an expression of the opinions of a majority of its members, without their having made themselves thoroughly acquainted with

all the facts of the case and all the doctrines in question, such opinions might be of but little value.

Even if, in the opinion of the members of the Presbytery of New York, the views of Dr. Briggs were incorrect, this could not of itself be equivalent to a condemnation of his views as heretical. The General Assembly of 1824, in pointing out to the Synod of Kentucky that a wrong had been done in condemning Mr. Craighead because of his "perverting, etc., the sentiments of the preachers and writers in our connection," said: "In our connection there are a multitude of preachers and writers differing by many shades of opinion from each other. How then can this be a just ground of accusation?" (Moore's Digest, p. 578.)

CHAPTER XII.

THE WRONG AND ITS REMEDY.

THE foregoing review has not dealt with the prolonged discussion in the Washington Assembly on the question of jurisdiction and procedure, — not because that question was not important or had not a vital connection with the proper issuing of the case, but because it was of less importance than the discussion of the merits of the case, and also because the necessarily protracted discussion of it seemed both to weary the court before the merits of the case were reached, and in various ways obscure the real issue.

As the court, in the exercise of its discretion, saw fit to pass by the Synod of New York and try the case on a direct appeal from the decision of the presbytery, all that need be remarked here is that in thus exercising its discretion, the Assembly did not act in accordance with a precedent established in 1816 in the Bourne case, to the effect that when it is discretionary as to whether a case shall be transferred from the presbytery to the synod or directly to the General Assembly, the wishes of the accused shall be respected, and he shall be tried by the court he prefers. (See Moore's Digest, p. 555.) It is true also that, in refusing to accede to Dr. Briggs' wish to be first tried by

the synod, the Assembly deprived him of the right of complaint, and that at a time when complaint of his against action of the presbytery was already pending before the Synod of New York.

Another grave question raised by the defendant and set aside by the Assembly was as to the legality of entertaining an appeal against a verdict of acquittal in any case, and putting a man on trial for his ecclesiastical life a second time. But this question need not be discussed here.

The gravest question as to procedure presented by the defendant and overborne by the Assembly was not in connection with the discussion of the question of jurisdiction, but in the discussion of the merits of the case; namely, the disregarding of an important precedent established in 1824, in the Craighead case. The principle laid down in that precedent was expressed in the following explicit terms: —

“A man cannot fairly be convicted of heresy for using expressions which may be so interpreted as to involve heretical doctrines, if they may also admit of a more favorable construction; because no one can tell in what sense an ambiguous expression is used but the speaker or writer, and he has a right to explain himself; and in such cases candor requires that a court should favor the accused by putting on his words the more favorable rather than the less favorable construction.

“Another principle is that no man can rightly be convicted of heresy by inference or implication; that is, we must not charge an accused person with holding those consequences which may legitimately flow from his asser-

tions. Many men are grossly inconsistent with themselves; and while it is right in argument to overthrow false opinions by tracing them in their connections and consequences, it is not right to charge any man with an opinion which he disavows." (Moore's Digest, p. 224.)

Not only did the Washington Assembly disregard this precedent, but the Prosecuting Committee, through one of their number, Dr. Birch, went so far as to cast slight upon it — not to say upon the Assemblies by which it had been instituted and respected — by boldly affirming with reference to it that "the position that a man cannot be condemned on an inference, even though it be a necessary inference, is a false one."

To the disregard of the principles laid down in the above precedent, the suspension of Dr. Briggs from the gospel ministry is wholly due. Had the Assembly not convicted Dr. Briggs of heresy by inference or implication, and by charging him with opinions which he disavows, it could not have convicted him at all. Had a presbytery or synod convicted him in the same way, on his appealing to the General Assembly the Assembly would have been bound to reverse the decision of the lower court, or else depart from what has been the well-established policy of the church in the past, as may be seen by referring to the action of the supreme court of the church in the two following important cases.

Mr. Craighead was suspended from the gospel ministry on a decision of the Synod of Kentucky,

based upon inference or implication, and although there were several particulars in his conduct which the Assembly severely condemned, the decision of the synod was reversed, and Mr. Craighead was restored by the Presbytery of West Tennessee, acting under the Assembly's instructions. (Moore's Digest, p. 225.)

The following extracts from the Assembly's deliverance in the case may serve to illustrate the application of the above principles:—

“Mr. Craighead may be understood as teaching that the only real agency of the Spirit was in inspiring the Scriptures and confirming them by signs and miracles. There is much in his discourse that has this bearing, and undoubtedly this is the common impression among the people where it is best known. This was the idea of the Synod of Kentucky when they condemned him, and this is in fact denying the operation of the Spirit in our days; and whether his expressions have been fairly interpreted or not, they are dangerous and ought to be condemned. In justice to Mr. Craighead, however, it ought to be remembered that he utterly disclaims this meaning in his defence set up to this Assembly; and would it be fair to continue to charge upon him opinions which he solemnly disavows? Of the sincerity of his disavowal God is the judge. The conclusion is that the first charge, though supported by strong probabilities, is not so conclusively established as to remove all doubt, because the words adduced in proof will bear a different construction from that put upon them by the presbytery and synod.

“The evidence in support of the second charge is still less clear and conclusive. The charge is:—

“‘We charge him with denying, vilifying, and misrepresenting the doctrine of Divine foreordination and sovereignty and election.’

“It might, perhaps, be shown by argument that Mr. Craighead uses many expressions not consistent with these doctrines; but agreeably to the principle laid down above, he must not be charged with holding these consequences unless he has avowed them.” (Moore’s Digest, pp. 224, 225.)

Twelve years after the establishing of the above precedent, the Synod of Philadelphia disregarded it in the celebrated case of the Rev. Albert Barnes. In reversing the synod’s decision, the General Assembly pointed out the distinctions which the synod had overlooked in relying upon the inferences they had drawn from Mr. Barnes’ language. There is a close parallel between the Barnes case and the Briggs case in this particular, that both of these defendants were condemned on a misunderstanding of terms and their application, and on the teaching of extra-Confessional, not contra-Confessional opinions, as a comparison of the record of the trial of Dr. Briggs with the following extracts from the deliverance of the Assembly in the Barnes case will show:—

“Resolved, That the decision of the Synod of Philadelphia, suspending Rev. Albert Barnes from all the functions proper to the gospel ministry be and it hereby is reversed.” [Yeas, 145; nays, 78; declined voting, 11.]

In reply to two protests which were presented the Assembly made the following statements as to the doctrines involved:—

“The correctness of the preceding positions is confirmed, in the opinion of the Assembly, by a careful analysis of the real meaning of Mr. Barnes under each charge, as ascertained by the language of his book and the revisions, disclaimers, explanations, and declarations which he has made.

“In respect to the first charge, that Mr. Barnes teaches that all sin is voluntary, the context and his own declarations show that he refers to all *actual* sin merely, in which he affirms the sinner acts under no compulsion.

“The second charge implies neither heresy nor errors, but relates to the expression of an opinion on a matter concerning which no definite instruction is contained either in the Bible or in the Confession of Faith.

“In respect to the third charge Mr. Barnes has not taught that unregenerate men are able, in the sense alleged, to keep the commandments and convert themselves to God. It is an inference of the prosecutor from the doctrine of natural ability as taught by Edwards, and of the natural liberty of the will as taught in the Confession of Faith, chap. ix., sec. i. On the contrary, he does teach, in accordance with our standards, that man by the fall, hath wholly lost all *ability of will* to any spiritual good accompanying salvation.

“In respect to the fourth charge, that faith is an act of the mind, Mr. Barnes does teach it, in accordance with the Confession of Faith and the Bible; but he does not deny that faith is a fruit of the special influence of the Spirit, and a permanent holy habit of mind, in opposition to a created physical essence. That faith is ‘counted for righteousness’ is the language of the Bible, and as used by Mr. Barnes means, not that faith is the meritorious ground of justification, but only the instrument by which the benefit of Christ’s righteousness is appropriated.

“In respect to the fifth charge Mr. Barnes nowhere denies, much less ‘sneers’ at the idea that Adam was the covenant and federal head of his posterity; on the contrary though he employs not these terms, he does, in other language, teach the same truths which are taught by this phraseology.

“In respect to the sixth and seventh charges, that the sin of Adam is not imputed to his posterity, and that mankind are not guilty or liable to punishment on account of the first sin of Adam, it is to be observed that it is not taught in the Confession of Faith that the *sin* of Adam is imputed to his posterity. The imputation of the *guilt* of Adam’s sin, Mr. Barnes affirms, though not as including personal identity and the transfer of moral qualities, both of which are disclaimed by our standard writers and by the General Assembly.

“In respect to the eighth charge, that Christ did not suffer the penalty of the law, as the vicarious substitute of His people, Mr. Barnes only denies the literal infliction of the whole curse, as including remorse of conscience and eternal death, but admits and teaches that the sufferings of Christ, owing to the union of the Divine and human natures in the person of the Mediator, were a full equivalent.

“In respect to the ninth charge, that the righteousness of Christ is not imputed to His people, Mr. Barnes teaches the imputation of the righteousness of Christ, but not as importing a transfer of Christ’s personal righteousness to believers, which is not the doctrine of our church. And when he says that there is no sense in which the righteousness of Christ becomes ours, the context and his own declarations show that he simply means to deny a literal transfer of His obedience; which, on the contrary, he

teaches is so imputed or set to our account as to become the only meritorious cause or ground of our justification.

“In respect to the tenth charge, Mr. Barnes has not taught that justification consists in pardon only, but has taught clearly that it includes the reception of believers into favor, and their treatment as if they had not sinned.” (Moore’s Digest, pp. 226–227.)

Had the Assembly of 1893 observed distinctions of terms and made “a careful analysis of the real meaning of Dr. Briggs under each charge,” as the Assembly of 1836 did in the case of Mr. Barnes, the verdict of acquittal by the New York Presbytery would have been sustained by the Washington Assembly.

Upon a calm and impartial review of the whole case, one cannot but regret that this course was not taken. It would have saved the Church and the world the peril which must arise from the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States declaring in effect that one of the ablest Biblical scholars, if not the very ablest, in that great church, has, as the result of over twenty years of special study and research, come to the following conclusions: (1) That the human reason and the Church are of equal authority with the Bible, and are in themselves sources of salvation (doctrines which Dr. Briggs has neither held nor taught). (2) That the Bible is not the inspired Word of God (a conclusion which Dr. Briggs utterly repudiates). (3) That many of those who die in sin may be regenerated and saved in the middle state (a doctrine which Dr. Briggs distinctly declares he has

not found in the Word of God, and therefore can neither accept nor teach).

To publish to the world that a Christian scholar of the well-known ability of Dr. Briggs has reached such conclusions as these, is to put a weapon in the hands of the foes of saving truth which they will use with tremendous effect in destroying the confidence of many in the Word of God. They will say, "Oh yes! The great mass of the membership of the Presbyterian Church believe so and so, but here is the opinion of an expert, whose opinion is worth more than the opinions of all less scholarly persons put together."

It was alleged as an offence that the views of Dr. Briggs were being "industriously spread." But alas! unintentionally indeed, yet none the less truly, the false views attributed to Dr. Briggs are being a thousand times more industriously spread through the action of those who have mistakenly opposed him.

The sooner the world is assured that Dr. Briggs does not either hold or teach a single one of the heretical doctrines for the alleged holding of which he has been condemned and suspended from the gospel ministry, the better for the Church and for the world at large.

The injury done has not been mainly the discouraging of ministers, young men and others in the Presbyterian Church, from a critical study of the Holy Scriptures, or the inciting of them to pursue such study in a spirit of hostility to the Church; nor has it been mainly that it has exposed the Presbyterian Church to the loss of influence for good through a

loss of prestige as a church which has always been prepared to settle questions that have arisen regarding the truth, on the basis of the broadest and most accurate intelligence, and not on the ground of tradition and popular opinion.

I cannot say that an injury has been done to Union Theological Seminary; for intelligent young men, looking toward the ministry, will judge for themselves, from their knowledge of the merits of the case, and will be likely to declare themselves in favor of liberty to think.

Nor has the wrong done been simply a wrong to Dr. Briggs. He may be able to endure to be misunderstood. His consciousness of having to endure this may itself be a source of comfort to him. He may look unto One infinitely greater than all earth's divines, Who was charged with being a blasphemer and condemned by the leaders of the orthodox Church of His day, and may feel that in having to bear a like cross after Him he is infinitely honored. He may be cheered too by the conviction that the time will not be long in coming when his views will be better understood.

But whatever wrong may have been done to Dr. Briggs, or to the seminary in which he is a much esteemed teacher, or to the consciences of brethren in the Presbyterian Church near and far who feel that the Church which they love and truths that are dear to their hearts have been alike misrepresented, the great wrong done is that the truth has not been brought out and made to shine. On the contrary,

error has been honored and magnified by being bidden to quote, as on its side, a great Biblical scholar born and educated in the Presbyterian Church. If any one thing more than another grieves Dr. Briggs, it must be that in spite of all his arguments, explanations, and solemn protestations to the contrary, his opponents have persisted in representing to the world that the result of all his scholarship and years of special study of the Holy Scriptures, has been to lead him to teach that the Bible is not the infallible Word of God, and to cause him to disregard its authority and to do despite unto the Saviour whom the Bible reveals.

This is indeed a painful position in which to place one who loves the Lord, who loves the Bible as His inspired Word, who rejoices in Christ, and has no confidence in the flesh, but hates error in all its forms. Yet this is the effect of the suspension of Dr. Briggs from the gospel ministry on the charges preferred against him.

Is there no relief from such a position? There is. It will be competent for another General Assembly, after due investigation, to say that the circumstances surrounding the trial of Dr. Briggs were such as prevented the Assembly at Washington from being in proper possession of all the facts and arguments presented, and that, as the result, Dr. Briggs was condemned for holding heretical views, which he solemnly disavows, and for holding extra-Confessional views, which were only supposed to be heretical; and that on a more minute and extended examination of the evidence and arguments in the case than it was pos-

sible for the Assembly at Washington to make, it has been found that the accused did not either hold or teach heretical views, and that therefore he be relieved of the sentence passed upon him.

But can a General Assembly correct errors into which a preceding Assembly may have fallen? It would be unfortunate for the Presbyterian form of government if it could not. An Assembly not only *can* reverse the decision of a preceding Assembly, but *has* repeatedly done this.

The Assembly of 1822 found that the Assembly of 1811 had erred in a decision it rendered in connection with the Craighead case, and accordingly reversed that decision, the result of which was that Mr. Craighead, who had been suspended from the ministry, was restored. (Moore's Digest, p. 586).

The Assembly of 1864, N. S., on being memorialized by the Synod of Onondaga, reversed a decision of the past Assembly on two grounds: (1) "that the last Assembly seemed to have acted without such a knowledge of all the facts of the case as a regular presentation of the complaint and the records would have given them;" and (2) on the ground that they had overlooked the principle that the discretion of a court is not a matter of review by the General Assembly. (Moore's Digest, p. 533.)

It will be competent therefore for a synod, presbytery, session, or single individual in the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, to memorialize the next or some subsequent General Assembly, praying that Dr. Briggs be relieved of the sentence

of suspension passed upon him; and the memorial may assign valid reasons, which need cast no reflection upon either the last or any preceding Assembly. The Westminster Confession intends no reflection when it says (chap. xxxi., sec. iv.): "All synods or councils since the Apostles' times, whether general or particular, may err, and many have erred; therefore they are not to be made the rule of faith or practice, but to be used as an help in both."

CHAPTER XIII.

CLOSING SUMMARY.

AS a lover of the Presbyterian Church, though a stranger alike to Dr. Briggs, the prosecution, and the members of the Washington Assembly, and having no personal interest whatever in the issue of this case, I have this testimony to bear as the result of having heard the whole case discussed in the Assembly at Washington, and thereafter having carefully reviewed all the evidence and arguments as contained in the official report of the Assembly:—

1. That while the language used by Dr. Briggs in speaking of the Bible, the Church, and the Reason as three great fountains of Divine authority, seemed at first to convey an idea which as an orthodox Presbyterian I could not accept, a more careful reading of the argument of Dr. Briggs, together with the explanations made by him before the Assembly, has made it perfectly clear that his views in regard to the authority of the Bible, the Church, and the Reason are eminently Scriptural and in entire accord with the doctrines of the Westminster Confession and Catechisms.

2. That while Dr. Briggs holds, in common with all orthodox scholars and divines, that errors of

various kinds are faithfully recorded in the Holy Scriptures, he at the same time holds firmly to the doctrine of plenary inspiration, and believes that such recorded errors do not in any way interfere with the doctrine that the Bible is the only infallible rule of faith and practice, but that, on the contrary, when, through a right understanding of the consent of all the parts, the Bible's teaching is ascertained, it is seen to be in truth the inspired Word, the revelation of the mind and will of God.

3. That while, in common with many orthodox scholars and divines, Dr. Briggs believes that Moses was not the author of the Pentateuch as a whole, and that Isaiah did not write one half of the book that bears his name; and while in this he differs from the popular and traditional opinion regarding the authorship of these portions of Holy Scripture, he does not differ from anything taught in the Word of God, or the Westminster standards; nor does he hold those views in such a way as to lessen his reverence for those parts of Scripture as the inspired Word of God, or to cause him to question any of the statements made either in them or in other parts of Scripture regarding these six books or the persons commonly regarded as their authors, but, on the contrary, his reverence for those parts of Scripture, and the Word of God as a whole, is increased.

4. That while Dr. Briggs holds what is called the doctrine of progressive sanctification after death, in opposition to instantaneous perfection at the moment of death, his views, when analyzed, are found to be

in substantial agreement with those of all orthodox Christians, the difference being mainly in the terms used and not at all in the essential truth that all believers at death pass immediately into the presence of Christ, into a state of exalted blessedness, although they do not attain to the highest blessedness until after the resurrection and the Day of Judgment.

5. That with reference to the two charges upon which Dr. Briggs has not been tried, the first of these charges — namely, that many of the Old Testament predictions have been reversed by history, and that the great body of Messianic prediction has not been and cannot be fulfilled — is based upon a misunderstanding of language and arguments used by Dr. Briggs, and charges him with holding views which are directly opposed to the views he does hold, and which he has taught for years with great ability and clearness.

With regard to the second of these two “rejected charges,” — namely, that the processes of redemption extend to the world to come in the case of many who die in sin, — this charge is also based upon a misunderstanding of language and arguments used by Dr. Briggs, and charges him with holding views which he has distinctly declared that he does not hold, and has not found in all his searching of the Word of God.

My deep conviction is that Dr. Briggs has not been justly convicted of heresy, but that, on the contrary, he has been condemned and suspended from the ministry for deducing sound doctrines from the Word of God, — doctrines which are contrary to nothing contained in the Westminster standards, although they

may not all be found formulated in those standards ; and for manifesting a willingness to accept and teach any doctrine that may be proved from Scripture to be true, although it may not be found in any of the past decisions of synods and councils, the Westminster Assembly of divines included ; and in this he is in the truest accord with the Westminster Confession, — chapter i., section x. being as follows : “ The supreme judge by which all controversies of religion are to be determined, and all decrees of councils, opinions of ancient writers, doctrines of men, and private spirits, are to be examined and in whose sentence we are to rest, can be no other but the Holy Spirit speaking in the Scripture.” The civil power would never knowingly condemn any man for having only appeared to break the law ; neither will the Presbyterian Church. When the real position of the Rev. Dr. Briggs comes to be known, the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America will, without doubt, accord him that justice to which he is sacredly entitled, and remove the sentence passed upon him.

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