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WHITHER? O WHITHER?

TELL ME WHERE

BY

JAMES McCOSH, LITT.D., LL.D., D.D.

AUTHOR OF "PSYCHOLOGY, THE COGNITIVE POWERS," "PSYCHOLOGY, THE MOTIVE
POWERS," "FIRST AND FUNDAMENTAL TRUTHS," ETC.

NEW YORK
CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS

1889

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PRINTING AND BOOKBINDING COMPANY,
NEW YORK.

PREFATORY NOTE.

THIS is not so much a review of Dr. Briggs's *WHITHER?* as a defence of truth parallel and opposed to the line of attack.

The author acknowledges that the references to himself are too frequent, but what he states is largely the result of his lengthened personal experience.

PRINCETON, N. J., November, 1889.

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WHITHER? O WHITHER?

TELL ME WHERE.

I.

WHITHER? Ever since this question was put by Dr. Briggs, I have been anxious to have an answer clear and explicit. I have become still more anxious for this since his opening lecture on BIBLICAL HISTORY has been published.

Whither are we drifting? To answer this as to the world at large, or as to the whole Church of Christ, would require a sixteenth century folio, which we cannot bear in these degenerate days. But the religious public are earnestly, and the secular public curiously, looking for an answer to the more narrow and practicable question, What is to be the effect of Dr. Briggs's book and lecture on young men generally, and on students in particular, who admire his courage and his smartness, and especially on those who are troubled with religious doubts, or who wish or expect our Bible to be disintegrated that they may be free from its restraints? I have a great regard for the professor, and should like to have him answer his own question in the definite form in which I have stated it.

For the greater part of my life my main intercourse has

been with young men in Scotland, in Ireland, and now in America. In the two last countries I have had thousands of students under me. I confess that I am sensitively anxious as to whatever might undermine the principles of inquiring youth. My aim has been to establish them in the faith of the realities of nature and revelation. Toward this all my philosophy and all my teaching have tended. As I read the book and the lecture, I was ever asking, How are they to influence the rising generation? I know the excellencies and I know the temptations of young men. Young men have been the originators of nearly every great reforming movement. It is equally well known that ever since they adhered to Jeroboam the son of Nebat, "who made Israel to sin," they have been dissatisfied with the old, and asking with the Athenians, What new thing?

We have all seen the notice put up in a house which is being built, "No smoking allowed on the premises." On reading Dr. Briggs's papers, I felt as if this warning had been disregarded, and as if I saw sparks as from a cigar flying among inflammable materials. Dr. Briggs has taken a step beyond his American, and gone on with his German, teachers. People are asking whether his pupils may not logically take a step beyond him, and give him the credit of it. We know that Robertson Smith, of Scotland, who caused such trouble in the Church, placed his heresy to the account of one of his Free Church professors. The ablest man cannot always guide the movements which he starts. There is a risk in opening flood-gates. The tourist on the mountain top may loose a stone, and be amazed at the havoc which it makes as it descends. I know an able retired professor in America whose heart is almost broken as he looks at the departure from the truth of his pupils, whose early faith he had un-

dermined, without meaning it, by using startling phraseology and raising questions which he could not answer, and stirring up doubts which he could not allay.

We must have liberty—by all means have liberty. Christianity was liberty to those who felt the burdens of Judaism and the superstitions of heathenism. Protestantism was a fight for deliverance from the corruptions of Popery. Our young men insist on freedom of thought and action. If I have had any success as a teacher, I owe it in some measure to my having taken great care to allow liberty of thought to my pupils; I stand up for full liberty of inquiry and discussion, for liberty to discover the truth, to abide by it, to proclaim it, and defend it.

But while I allowed this, I never failed at the same time to enunciate the truth, to set it in the proper light, to give the history of opinions in regard to it, to explain, define, and defend it, and, if need be, answer objections. I am happy to find that my pupils, almost without exception, have adhered to the great principles (all I sought) of religion and morality. There are seven young men in Ireland and eighty in America who studied under me who are now professors; and, so far as I know, they are all clinging to the Word of God. I thank God and man for this. Meanwhile, I read Dr. Briggs's two clever works, and inquire what positive truths he has laid down to secure that his admiring pupils stand by the faith once delivered to the saints. He has set aside, under the disparaging name of "traditional theology," some doctrines most firmly believed by educated men in our country. Has he set forth clearly and unequivocally truths which will keep young men stable in these unstable times? No man expresses himself more clearly in exposing errors. Is he equally careful in building up truth? Thoughtful men have often called attention to the perilousness of a transi-

tion period when young men have to pass from one plane to another—they often fall in sliding from the one to the other. Herbert Spencer has expressed his anxiety on this subject. In tearing up the tares the wheat may be torn up also.

II.

WHITHER *are our young men moving?* Some are already answering. Our professor says, “The time has come for the reconstruction of theology, of polity of worship, and of Christian life” [*Pref.*]. “A new reformation is necessary” [p. 21], as if pointing to a reformation like that of the sixteenth century. “The ultimate Christianity that will suit our race will be as much higher than Protestantism, as Protestantism is higher than Romanism” [p. 16]. The hearts of our young men are beating responsively to these statements. A few are boldly expressing their feelings. We have come to a new era in the history of theological opinion. Germany is supplying us with a New Reformation. We are free from the bonds which have contracted the minds and oppressed the hearts of our fathers. We feel as if a new country were opened to us. A long vista is before us. The old is passing away like the night; a morning full of promise is dawning. We are about to pass out of the wilderness into Canaan, with its trees and flowers, its hills and streams. We have a smaller Bible, and a more generous method of interpreting it; a large portion is found to be poetry. We have a freer gospel to listen to, a more liberal gospel to preach. We have a *beau sabreur*, a dashing hussar, to lead us on.

Older and graver men are looking on doubtfully and anxiously. They say: We have heard how the Presby-

terian Churches in England became Rationalists and Socinians in the last century. We have read how the blight of moderatism spread over the Church of Scotland and extinguished, as by a chaff bed, all religious fervor. We are familiar with the story of Unitarianism coming over from Old England into New England and Harvard College, and how it has caked into a crystallized deism, or died down into the ashes of agnosticism. There are thoughtful fathers and mothers asking whether the new movement started is to be of a like nature and equally lethal. I say of a *like* nature, for it will not be the *same*. The old will come in new forms. The Old Serpent is too cunning to bring forth the old breed whose poison has been detected; a new species will be gendered in these days of evolution with very specious colors, as a means, to use an evolutionary phrase, of protection. Any new heresy which may arise will not take the old type, which every Christian now abhors as having had so deadly an influence. We are not likely to be troubled with a cold and clear rationalism of the Latin or French school; the new heresy will take a Teutonic form, as being born in Germany, and will be rich and showy as the child and heir of the Higher Criticism married to the Ideal Philosophy—now changing into a Sceptical Philosophy.

III.

WHITHER? *To Germany?* Theologians in the present day cannot do without Germany. Hundreds of students, many of them theologians, are studying in the universities of that country because they get there a scholarship which they cannot find in the four hundred colleges of America; not even from the leisured divines of the

Church of England in Oxford and Cambridge. We cannot hinder our young men from visiting Germany; the steamboats and railways are ready to carry them. The question is pressed upon us, How are we to get the good without the evil?

When I was in Germany I was not satisfied, as most American students are, with what the professors sitting in their studies are thinking and writing. I studiously conversed with people of all sorts, from Earl Goltz, Secretary of the King, Baron von Humboldt, and Chevalier von Bunsen, down through the merchants, farmers, mechanics, to the beer-drinking classes in the saloons. Of all countries in which I have travelled, Germany seems to have the least religion. Not that the people are in general undevout. Their religious hymns, so deep and tender, have kept alive a natural piety even when it does not express itself in formal acts. When I asked the common people about what they believed, which I always did in a delicate way, they often answered me, We make a religion for ourselves which suits us. The churches are not attended by the great body of respectable people. I have gone on the Sabbath to a large number of the churches in Hamburg and Berlin. These are few in number in proportion to the population; they are very large, and in most of them I found an attendance of only a few hundreds. On one of these Sabbaths there were thirty thousand people of good social standing at a masked ball. I conversed with the professors, other than the theological ones, on religion; with a German shrug of the shoulders, they said, We have not studied these subjects, we leave them to the theologians over the way. One of these said: "They do not believe their Bible, they have hewed it in pieces like Agag—I have gathered up some of the fragments, and I like them."

I charge the theologians with having produced this state of things. They sent out ministers who had no faith in the inspiration of the Bible. The people were shrewd enough to see this—it came out incidentally in a number of ways—and they ceased to read their Bibles and to attend church with regularity, as they do in this country. I confess that in passing out of Protestant Prussia into Catholic Austria I felt as if I were passing out of an arctic into a tropical zone, with no temperate region between.

But we must go down deeper. How comes it that there are such theologians, so unlike those we have in this country? All thinking people will give the same answer. It is because the theological professors are appointed and ruled by the State. Herr Kuntze, pastor of one of the large churches, which he kept filled because he was a fervent evangelical, told me a characteristic incident. There was a deep religious interest in his parish, the people wished to have prayer-meetings, and he applied to what he thought to be the proper authority. His paper was sent back, and he was told to apply in another quarter. He did so, and the paper was returned to be amended, and it passed from official to official till he obtained liberty to meet for prayer exactly one year after he made the first application.

This state of things will continue till the Church secures complete freedom from State interference, and especially from the control of the Iron Prince, who is a great ruler in civil affairs, but who is cramping the energies of the Church. When the command goes forth as to the Church, Loose it and let it go free, then we shall have a different set of pastors and teachers and a different kind of preaching—and, I may add, of theological professors. The greatest good which any man could do for the religion of the Continent of Europe would be to set the Churches free.

In this my old age, I rejoice that in my youth I had the grace given me to bear my testimony in behalf of the freedom of the Church, even though I had thereby to give up one of the most enviable livings in the Church of Scotland, without knowing at the time where I was to get another. My hope is that this our testimony may yet bear fruit in breaking the shackles which bind the old State Churches of Europe, and let the Christian people have their heaven-born privileges. This would produce a new kind of ministry and a new kind of theological teachers—I hope, with the old learning, but with a new faith.

We run no risk in America of the Churches submitting to the rule of the Congress or of the Law Courts. But the American Churches must take care that their belief in the Bible be not undermined by an agnostic philosophy and an unhallowed criticism proceeding from the Erastian teachers of Germany. As a most important duty, the Churches must provide theological professors with an erudition equal to that of Germany. Till this is done our young men will flock like birds in autumn to the superior erudition of Europe. When our candidates for the ministry do go to Germany, it should not be till they are trained in good principles at home and ready to sift the philosophy and theology of that country.

Of late there has been such an immigration of German theories that even those of us most disposed toward freedom of thought may have to take measures for protection. Andover lives mainly on German thinking, and if Union joins Andover—not in formal covenant but in a common belief and unbelief—we may well be anxious about the teaching and preaching of the rising ministry. When some young minister boldly tells his hearers from the pulpit of an Old Light Church in New York or Philadelphia, what he himself has been taught in his sem-

inary, that the Five Books of Moses were not written by Moses, and that Genesis and the early Scriptures are not history but collected poems, then the Church courts will be aroused and the crisis has come.

IV.

WHITHER? *What are we to make of creeds?* These are set for the defence of the truth. They do not constitute our valued property, they are simply fences to keep off intruders. "Without are dogs." The tendency of landscape gardening in the present day is to remove fences, in order to give more of the appearance and air of freedom. There is a like disposition to remove old fences in religion. Still, we need such demarcations to protect our cherished faith. We have to secure that we do not send forth preachers to proclaim to our people a gospel which is not the gospel of Christ and salvation, but another gospel. This is done, by some religious bodies, by a Council examining candidates for the ministry. But it is most effectively done by a printed document which anyone may read and know what our Church believes, and probationers may study and know what is required of them.

But in the formation of, and subscription to, a new creed, there is need of great carefulness, delicacy, and tenderness. There are two all-important points to be attended to.

First, excessive care must be taken that every article in thought and language be founded on the Word of God, and be in strict accordance with it. We must not lower the standard to suit it to the sentiment of the day. The Word of God was given us to elevate public opinion, and not to be lowered by it. On the other hand, we must

avoid harsh expressions (we have a few such in the Westminster Standards) which are supposed to be drawn from Scripture, but may not be so. I might reverently accept from God, in the Bible, language which I would not take from fallible man.

We must be especially on our guard against the use of what I call *Inferential Theology*. The deepest law in physics is that there is nothing in the effect which was not potentially in the cause ; and the fundamental law in logic is that there be nothing in the conclusion which is not contained in the premises. We must be very careful in drawing conclusions in the higher regions of theology—so far above the earth—where the sovereignty of God, preordination, election, reprobation, and the salvation of infants, and heathens to whom Christ has not been preached, are discussed. Divines at times rashly rush into the holiest of all, where angels would veil their faces with their wings. Dr. Briggs says that we must have speculation in theology. The individual thinker may indulge in this as he pleases, as Origen and the mediæval mystics did, but as he performs his gymnastics on these heights he is apt to falter and fall, amid the laughter of wiser men ; it was Luther who said that angels amuse themselves with the theological speculations of men—how he knew this, without speculating himself, I cannot tell. To carry up human theories into high heavenly truths is like constructing walls and planning railways in the empyrean above the clouds. I believe most devoutly in the good sovereignty of God, but I refuse to let human logic draw conclusions which would strip man of his freedom and thereby free him from responsibility.

Secondly, those who subscribe the creed have to do it in good faith. I am afraid that there is too much of loose signatures in the Churches. There is a temptation

here to which office-bearers in State endowed Churches are especially exposed. Ministers cannot get their livings, and they and their elders cannot enter upon their spheres of usefulness, till they sign a creed, perhaps a very complicated one. In consequence, they are very apt to attach their signatures, following, without perceiving it, the principle that the end justifies the means. The issue is that ever and anon the idea comes upon them that this is wrong, is seen by God, and may come to be seen by men; and this rankles in their bosom to make them unhappy, at times wretched. If they crush it, as it is possible to do, the conscience is deadened and their zeal for the faith is hindered.

I have come in contact with many such cases. In my younger years, when good men were seeking to throw off the incubus of moderatism which was still lying on the church, I knew ministers who had signed the Westminster Standards, with all their articles, without believing them. Their unbelief came out to view by what they said in the freedom of conversation, at times in their sermons and public addresses. As I rode round in my probationer's days, preaching for them, they not infrequently confessed that they were not prepared to stand by all that is in the Confession, and suggested to me, as a young man, that I need not be very particular or precise about what I signed. I was baptized by an accomplished parish minister, afterward a professor, who was believed, on good grounds, to be a Socinian. I have preserved a volume of his sermons in which there is not one word of gospel from beginning to end. I have before me a volume of *Scotch Sermons*, as they are called, issued a few years ago by ministers of high literary attainment, but who show that they do not hold by the doctrines of the creed which they have signed. The suspicion of this gets abroad among the shrewdest of the people,

and they cannot listen with patience to the ministrations of those who preach what (it is so alleged) they do not believe. In my younger years I had to argue with hard-headed mechanics who would not be convinced that their parish clergy were not hypocrites. Such scenes as these provoked and moved me till I threw myself, body, soul, and spirit, into that movement which blasted for the time my earthly prospects, but gained a victory for the freedom of the Church of Christ.

In my intercourse with German peasants and store-keepers, I tried to find how it was that while they did not profess to be infidels they did not go to the house of God on the Sabbath ; and the answer commonly given, when I could gain their confidence, was that their parish pastors had evidently no faith in the Bible from which they preached. I cannot conceive a Church to be in a more deplorable state than one in which there is an evident inconsistency between the professed creed and the actual belief of those who minister in the Word. I do hope that as the issue of this discussion about the revision of the Westminster Standards we shall all, old men and young, have a more sensitive apprehension of the responsibility involved in the formation of creeds and the subscription to them.

V.

WHITHER ? *The drift of the Westminster Standards ?*
 Dr. Briggs is well acquainted with their history. He has a large library of books bearing on this subject. He has given us many extracts from these. Let us look at the conclusions which he has reached. " We must recognize that there are inadequate statements, and even errors of doctrine [mark, even of doctrine] in the Westminster

standards and the great creeds of the Reformation" [p. 274]. If this be so, it is surely the immediate duty of the Presbyterian and the other Churches springing from the Reformation to supply these inadequacies, to correct these errors, and to avoid pressing them on our young candidates for the ministry.

The burden of Dr. Briggs's book is to show that the Presbyterian Church has departed from its creed; that, in fact, all the Protestant Churches have done so. It is humiliating and painful to read his charges, clearly, unmistakably, and emphatically made. "The Westminster system has been virtually displaced by the teaching of the dogmatic divines. It is no longer practically the standard of the faith of the Presbyterian Church. The Catechisms are not taught in our churches, the Confession is not expounded in our theological seminaries. The Presbyterian Church is not orthodox judged by its own standards. It has neither the old orthodoxy nor the new orthodoxy. It is in perplexity. It is drifting toward an unknown and mysterious future" [p. 223]. On hearing these charges, our old men who have been upholding the Presbyterian Church will stand aghast. Our young men, especially those intending for the ministry, will widen their eyes in wonder. But they must listen to more. "Modern Presbyterianism has departed from the Westminster Standards all along the line" [*Pref.* viii.]. The young man asks, Can I conscientiously or comfortably join the Presbyterian Church? But he has to read on. "In the manner of worship the tendency of the Presbyterian Church has been from bad to worse since the Westminster Assembly" [p. 49]. But this is not all. "The modern Presbyterian Church has departed from the Westminster divines in its standards of morals and good works, and there is a lack of definite views among the ministry and the theo-

logians in the whole department of Christian ethics. The whole doctrine of sanctification is in confusion" [p. 157].

The Episcopalians, the Methodists, the Baptists, the Congregationalists ask our youth what he thinks. He concludes that he must abandon the Church of his fathers. However, there are other Churches. But the charge becomes more sweeping. "The traditional theology of the Presbyterian Church is not in harmony with the Westminster symbols. If we should take the Articles of the Church of England, we should find that the Episcopal Churches are in a similar situation. We should find that the Methodist, the Baptist, the Lutheran, indeed, all denominations of Christians, have departed from their standards and are in the drift of the nineteenth century" [p. 225]. Whither? the youth asks. I may devote my life to the work of clearing the Church from this corrupt mass of inconsistency, hypocrisy, and treachery. But the work is an Herculean one, it is the cleansing of an Augean stable; I, who am no Hercules, cannot abide in this offensive atmosphere. Anywhere rather than to the Church; to law, to medicine, to business, to store-keeping, to the honest trade of a shoemaker, or tailor. I loved the Church, I meant to make her my bride. I shed a tear as I part from her; but there is no help for it, she is fallen and disgraced.

What can be the meaning of the professor of theology in bringing all these charges against his Church. No doubt he believes them. I am sure he is sincere. I cannot look into the heart and judge of his motives. I must believe them to be good. But I am entitled to look to the *whither* of his views and proposals. He tells us: "The statements of the Westminster symbols are by no means perfect, they are capable of revision and improvement." Does he, then, propose to revise and amend? He tells us,

emphatically, "*Progress is not in that direction.*" In what direction, then? The young men will carry out his principles, and answer that question.

He gives us a great many quotations from the other works of the Westminster divines and their contemporaries. It was scarcely necessary for him to do this. They are so clear and plain that they do not need other works to elucidate them. The great body of the great Puritan preachers inculcate the same truths in much the same language, which is that of the Confession of Faith. Here I am tempted to express a wish that the professor had given the same recommendation as Chalmers did ever and anon to us his pupils, to fill their hearts with the practical writings of the great Puritan divines, such as Baxter, Howe, Marshal, Owen, and Charnock. No appeals so direct and searching as theirs, so faithful and so loving. I am sure I got immeasurable good from following the counsel of my great master.

Without claiming any great shrewdness, I think I see the *whither* of these attacks on the creeds. A full account is given of their variations, from age to age. Their defects and mistakes are carefully specified. No proposal is made, so far as I can see, to bring back students, ministers, and divines to the standards pure and simple. *Progress is not made in that direction.* I fear the impression left is that in the subscription to the symbols there is great liberty allowed; that there is very little binding obligation in the Standards of the Church; that we may make of them what we please, choosing this and avoiding that; that we may look upon them as a precious relic of a by-gone day; as an instructive fossil telling us of the imperfect formations of earlier ages; and that meanwhile we must have the truth advance and become more attractive and, therefore, more effective. No attempt is made

to counteract this by showing, what it would not be difficult to do, the substantial sameness, with very slight diversities, of the doctrine of all the Churches of the Reformation, and the identity of this doctrine with that which has been held all along by the American Presbyterian Church down to the present day.

The professor of the Union Theological Seminary seems to be particularly anxious about the orthodoxy of Princeton Theological Seminary. As these two institutions are rivals, people think that the charges against Dr. Charles Hodge and his son, Dr. Alexander A. Hodge, are far from being gracious or becoming. My conviction was, until now, that the same doctrine is taught in both seminaries. It would be a most unhappy thing to find a different impression getting abroad. Charles Hodge is referred to sixteen times in *WHITHER*, and Alexander Hodge twenty-eight times, in most cases to be found fault with. Both are charged with departing from the Standards. On first reading this I felt the accusation to be simply ridiculous, and this feeling deepened when I found the charges repeated again and again. It would be equally ridiculous to attempt to prove the orthodoxy of the great Princeton divines. Both father and son express their views so clearly and so fully that he who runs may read. When they need a defence a thousand swords will be drawn from their scabbards by pupils and followers.

The two modern divines present the truth under a somewhat different aspect and in somewhat different language from those in which it appears in the seventeenth century symbols. But the truth is one and the same. It is the same body in a somewhat different dress; it is the same proclamation in different tongues. I was trained in a school somewhat different from either the Westminster or the Princeton schools, under the eloquent and philosophic

Chalmers. But I am happy to find that the truth set forth in each of these schools—if, indeed, they can be so called—are the same, the very same. I regard this as a very satisfactory evidence of the unity of the Protestant faith. Bating a few statements and expressions, not sanctioned, as it appears to me, in Scripture, I could sign each of the three theological systems and not be guilty of even apparent inconsistency. I am not so sure that I could sign the creed of Dr. Briggs, if he and his followers succeed in establishing one. It is a very dexterous move to attack the orthodoxy of the Princeton divines.* For if the Old School men are not meddled with in departing from the Confession, we New Light men may do the same, though in a different direction, without being disturbed. If any Old School man charges us with departing from the Standards, we can reply, by a powerful *argumentum ad hominem*, You are not entitled to attack us, for you are guilty of the same offence. In short, we have all departed from what we have subscribed, and the sooner some of us younger men unite to fashion a new and more liberal creed the better; a creed that will admit the German neology which interprets the Bible more accurately. All this is very dexterous, I say, but it may turn out that the weapon which is used with such agility may be turned against him who employs it.

VI.

WHITHER? *The Revision of the Standards?* I have announced to the presbytery to which I belong the position which I have definitely taken. I am anxious it should

* It is what is vulgarly called, The advantage of having the first word of scolding.

be known, and so I insert it here, that I may not be identified with those who hope in the revision to leave out or to alter the grand old doctrines of our Church clearly contained in the Word of God :

Ever since I became a teacher of the science of mind I have given more attention to philosophy than theology. In doing this, I have been able to serve religion more effectively than by any other course which I could take. My philosophy is realistic, being an exposition of the facts of our nature, and being so, it must be favorable to the Scriptures, which reveal to us what we are as no other work has done. But I have been watching all along the signs of the times, and feel it to be honest to make known my views in every crisis of opinion in the Church. Hitherto I have not favored a revision of our Standards, but the time has come when we must face the question which is now being put in the Presbyterian Churches all over the world. I know there is some risk in stirring up the inquiry, but there is more danger in trying to ignore or suppress it—which, in fact, cannot now be done. Our students, our young men generally, and our laity, are raising the question, and it is the plain duty of the Church to face it boldly and to guide the movement in the right direction. There are some passages in the Confession of Faith and in the Larger Catechism of which it may be doubted whether they are founded on the Word of God and which are offensive in their expression. Further, there is a want of a clear and prominent utterance, such as we have in the Scriptures, of the love of God, as shown in the redemption of Christ, which is sufficient for all men, and in the free and honest offer of salvation to all men, non-elect as well as elect. For the last thirty-nine years of my life my intercourse has been chiefly with young men who are apt to open their hearts to me as knowing that I sym-

pathize with them. Most of our young men have not paid much attention to the Confession, but they will now do so, and as they do so they will find certain passages knotty, crabbed, and hard to digest. I do fear that some of our best young men who meant to become ministers may be allured away to other professions, and that those who go on to preach the gospel will find themselves annoyed and hindered by unwarranted expressions staring them in the face. In these circumstances, I am of opinion that the Church should as speedily as possible leave out a few obnoxious passages not at all needful to the completeness of the expression of the system of doctrine, and put in the very front a full declaration of God's love to men and a free offer of salvation. This being done for the present, the Church should hold itself ready to meet the wants of the years and ages as they roll on. I am not sure whether the present terms of subscription to the Standards will be sufficient in the distant or even in the near future. Some of our younger men are saying: "Nobody believes all the Confession, everybody rejects some parts, I may reject what displeases me." At this present time we get more than half our erudition from Germany, but also more than one-half of our heresies. Our Confession meets the heresies of the seventeenth, but not the more insidious ones of the nineteenth century. The Church has now to see that it has professors in our seminaries equal in learning to those in Germany. Ever since the Reformation, the Church has been amending its Confession. I confess that I should like to have in the Presbyterian Church a shorter and simpler creed than the Westminster Confession. At the same time our creed, be it shorter or be it longer, must contain all the saving truths embraced in the consensus of the Churches. I believe that in the age on which we have now entered the

Church will have to engage in a fight for "the faith once delivered to the saints." I hold that the Presbyterian Church is quite fit for that work. I deny that the great body of its ministers are Arminian or half-Arminian. I deny that Charles Hodge or Alexander Hodge have departed from the Confession of Faith. They may differ at times in the aspect they present and the phrases they use, but the truths are the same—those of the old Pauline theology. It was my privilege some years ago to bring all the evangelical Presbyterian Churches throughout the world into an Alliance. To accomplish this, I crossed the Atlantic Ocean three or four times, corresponded with hundreds of individuals, and with dozens of Churches. In drawing out the Constitution of the Alliance, I took pains to let each Church have its own creed. In the agitation now raised each Church will have to consider what is to be its Confession. Meanwhile I trust the Churches will correspond with one another, and each help the other. This will not be done this year or next year, but will be the work of years to come. As the issue, there will be a closer union and a wider extension of the Presbyterian Churches all over the world.

It will be observed that I have proposed an omission of some statements and phrases in our Confession and Catechisms. I have done so because, in the course which we should pursue in defending the truth, we should not be burdened with baggage, which the Romans called *impedimenta*.

But, it is urged by some, we are not required to accept the *ipsissima verba*, or all the statements, of the Standards. Why need we trouble ourselves with the amendment of our symbols? To this I have to answer, first, that we have to be troubled with them whether we wish it or not. The movement in a number of Churches all over the world,

and the overwhelming majority in the New York Presbytery, show this clearly. But, as far more important, we should see that our Standards are made as perfect as possible; this we owe to the Church and the world. If in our personal conduct we have made a rash statement, we hasten to correct it; if we have done an unworthy deed, we hasten to make reparation. We should act on the same principle in dealing with our visible creed. If the divines of the seventeenth century have used an unguarded expression, if they have sanctioned a doubtful doctrine or stated a truth imperfectly, let us correct it as speedily as possible. I know that, when any Presbyterian threatens to leave our Church and join the Episcopal or Methodist Church, there are people who show him certain obnoxious passages in our symbolic books to draw him away from us. If these are not necessary to our faith and salvation—and, still more, if they be not found expressly in the Word—it is surely wise to remove them. Till this is done there is no prospect of union with other evangelical denominations. As I am writing this sentence, I receive a letter from a Methodist minister, president of a college, saying that if my plan is carried out he will be ready at once to sign our Confession.

Dr. Cunningham, the great logical theologian of Scotland, used to say: "I have no objection to a revision of the Confession, provided it is done by one who believes in the Confession." If revision be carried, I have no doubt that there will be a hard contest about what the amended creed should contain. If it be a duty to amend our Confession, it is a still more important duty to see that it contains all the great truths of salvation. If I am spared a few years longer, which, however, I have no reason to expect, I may be found contending for the sanctioning of such truths as the sovereignty of God, authority of Scripture, the deity of

Christ, and the atonement for sin, should there be any attempt to displace them.

VII.

WHITHER? *The Bible?* We are now on holy ground. "Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground." We have to put off all levity. We have to inquire, What is really the Word of God? Having found this, we dare not add to it nor take from it. There are positions here which we cannot surrender without being traitors to our Great King. It is this thought which has led me to leave my usual studies for a time, in order to give my feeble testimony to what God has been pleased to reveal to us.

I have before my mind's eye a young man of bright parts and intelligence. He has been trained by his father and mother, by his Sabbath-school teachers, and by his minister, in the common American faith as to the Bible, and is confirmed in it by finding all his associates cherishing the same belief. A student of theology lends him WHITHER? and the LECTURE ON BIBLICAL HISTORY, and tells him they are written by his able and learned professor of theology. He sets himself to read them with high expectation, and we watch him as he proceeds.

He has been told that the Pentateuch was written by Moses under the inspiration of God, and he believes that the events recorded there, such as the Creation of the World and the Fall of Man, are realities. The preaching of his minister, and his doctrine, all proceed on the belief that the narrative is true. But the new Book tells him that "recent criticisms have shown that the Pentateuch is composed of four parallel narratives with four codes

of legislation" [p. 283]. By a searching criticism the German critics have found what parts were written by each of the four different writers. "We have by careful induction gathered the theology of each of the documents by itself and then compared them, and have found such a thorough-going difference that it is simply impossible that they should have come from the same original author." The youth sees that if there be thorough-going differences, there will be the same whether the book was written by one man or by four. He wonders how the inspired writers, and our Lord Himself, should have ascribed the work with such thorough-going differences to one man, Moses. But he is told that many statements that were "inconsistent and contradictory are complementary and supplementary in different authors" [p. 15]. He hastens to get further information. "Scholars are not agreed in the names they give to the four documents. The priestly narrator is the Q. of Wellhausen, is the A. of the first Elohist of Dollmann. The prophetic narrator is the Jahvist. The theocratic narrator is the second Elohist. The Deuteronomist is agreed by all" [*Bib. Hist.*, p. 34]. "Higher Criticism has traced these four narratives in the Hexateuch, and has for the most part separated them so that we can place them in parallelism just as we do the four Gospels in our harmonies" [*Bib. Hist.*, p. 13]. The youth remarks, Fortunately the four Gospels are already separated for us, which makes a difference. It is shown that the four narratives correspond to the four Gospels. An original view is added. "Both correspond with the four great temperaments of mankind and the four great types of character that reappear throughout human history." The youth has read a good deal, and does not find these four types acknowledged by students of the human mind or by historians. He is beginning to suspect

that fancies instead of facts are being introduced. But the book announces to him that after the captivity, that is, one thousand years after the supposed time of Moses, an unknown editor "compacted them together, as Tatian did the Gospels in the second Christian century."

The reader had gone through WHITHER?, when the Sabbath interposed, and he had to teach a class. The lesson for the day was John i. 45: "We have found him of whom Moses did write." To instruct his pupils he had collected parallel passages, such as Luke xvi. 29; the words of Jesus, "They have Moses and the prophets;" and v. 31, "If they hear not Moses and the prophets"—passages which clearly announce that Moses is sanctioned by Jesus as the author of the earlier books of Scripture. What is our youth to make of these conflicting statements before him. His conscience is tender and sensitive. He is not prepared to tell his pupils that Moses did not write that part of Scripture which it is said "he did write." He is staggered and cannot go to his Sabbath-class, and he cannot even send a substitute, for he is determined that nothing shall be taught to his class of which he is not fully persuaded that it is true.

But he is fascinated, he fears, as the bird is by a serpent's eye. He must have the question settled. He finds that the opening of his Bible is "a poem," is an "epic," is a "lyric," "a drama." It is "an ancient epic describing the creation of the world" [p. 26]. It is "a stately lyric in six pentameter strophes" [p. 26]. "It paints the wondrous drama of the six days' work" [p. 26]. It is "a lyric of wonderful power and beauty." The youth has read, in a translation, Æschylus' "Prometheus Bound," and Dante's "Divine Comedy;" he has read Milton's "Paradise Lost" and Young's "Night Thoughts," and Pollock's "Course of Time," and he is told to look on Genesis as a

poem, like them, full of life and grandeur. In the appendix he finds a paper designated "The Epic of the Fall of Man," in which it is said: "The earlier chapters of Genesis contain brief, simple, and charming stories of the origin and early history of mankind, and bear traces of great antiquity. They were doubtless handed down for many generations in unwritten tradition ere they were committed to writing by the sacred writers. They passed through a series of editions, until at last they were compacted in that unique collection of inspired scripture which we call the book of Genesis" [*Bib. Hist.*, p. 39]. They are a series of real poems. "It was the good fortune of the author to make this discovery. Annual work upon these passages with his classes led him gradually toward it. He first noted a number of striking instances of parallelism of lines here and there, and thus detected snatches of poetry in several passages." "All the characteristic features of Hebrew poetry are clearly manifested in the poem. This led us to examine the Elohist narrative of the flood, and it proved to be a poem of the same Elohist story of the creation. We next examined the Jehovistic narrative of the temptation and fall, and found it to be a poem of an entirely different structure from the poems of the Elohist." "The poems of the Fall of Man exhibit the several features of Hebrew poetry." "The stories of Cain and Abel and the dispersion of the nations from Babel resolved themselves into the same poetical structure. And thus it has become manifest that "the earlier chapters of Genesis are a series of real poems" [*Bib. Hist.*, pp. 39-40].

The young man is now perplexed beyond measure. He shows the passages to his mother, and finds that she cannot help him. He can find nothing in the book or lecture to counteract these statements and allay his doubts and

fears. He wishes to know how far down in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament these principles go logically. He sees at once that the two first chapters of Luke, treating of the birth of our Lord, of the time and manner of it, and of his early life, must be removed from the region of historical narrative to that of poetry. The youth finds the marks of poetry, the parallelisms and correspondences in the discourses of our Lord, and even in the Epistles of Paul and John. He cries out: "If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?" He was to have spoken on the Sabbath of Christ in the Old Testament and the New, but he has to exclaim: "They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we know not where they have laid him."

I have to meet such cases. Young men unbosom themselves to me, and I never betray their confidence. But what ground am I to take? Am I to allow that it has been proved that Moses did not write the Pentateuch, that it is the work of a number of writers combined by an unknown editor who lived a thousand years after them, that a large portion of the earlier books are poems though they seem to be history, that we have to draw the fall of man from a drama, that we have no history of the creation out of nothing? If scholars have to answer this in the affirmative, it will soon become known; the journalists, whose conscience has been hardened by their being obliged to work on Sabbath, will eagerly publish it, the clubs will talk of it, there will be old men and young ready to propagate it. The truth, as the saying is, can injure nobody; and our ministers will not be able to keep it secret—they will have to notice it and publish it. When this comes to pass, the defenders of the faith, especially those who have adopted the new view of Scripture, will have a work to do of enormous magnitude. They will have to prepare

the public mind for this new state of things ; they will have to reason with and convince intelligent men ; they will have to soothe fathers and mothers anxious to know how to educate their children ; and they will have to instruct young men to keep them from breaking away from the Bible altogether ; they will have to modify our Sabbath-school, and our whole religious literature ; the people will have to be taught a new way of interpreting Scripture, and to encourage all their religious thoughts and belief to take a new form.

I know that in Germany, with its hymns, there are many who admit all that the professor has advocated, and who yet retain an ardent piety. But America is not ready for this. Those who take away the evil must, as a more important duty, be prepared to supply the good. This is a greater work than Christians in America have been required to engage in since the days of the Revolution. It is a Revolution—let it be made a Reformation.

I am not worthy, I am not competent, to engage in this work. I take a different stand. I am not amazed at the objections taken by those who would disintegrate the received Bible. I have heard them stated and repeated for the last forty years. I believe they have been answered in Germany and in England, and are now being answered in this country.

I have always understood that Moses may have got the materials of his history from various quarters ; perhaps a little from Egypt, but more, as is now being shown, from Chaldea—whence the race were scattered—this being handed down in the families of Abraham and Jacob. But these were brought into a unity by Moses under the inspiration of God.

The German philosophers, especially those of the school of Kant, are ever finding antinomies, that is, contradictions,

in our nature. I have been laboring, in my philosophic works, to show that the supposed contradictions are not in our minds but merely in the accounts given by the philosophers. In like manner, the Bible critics are seeking to discover antinomies in the Bible. I have not been able to find them. There are some apparent discrepancies which I may not be able, from my limited knowledge, to reconcile, but there are no positive contradictions.

There are different modes of expression in different parts of the Pentateuch. We may observe that in the present day there are diverse phrases to designate the Divine Being, such as Lord, God, Jehovah, Almighty, Deity. In our common speech and writing they are sometimes used indiscriminately, and sometimes a special phrase is employed, such as Jehovah, Almighty, to call attention to a special aspect. But we cannot argue from these a difference of character or belief on the part of those who employ them. Just as little from the various phrases and combination of phrases in Genesis can we place verses and paragraphs into four separate compartments. It is quite possible that in some of the narratives handed down through the family of Abraham one phrase, say Elohim, was used in one; and a different phrase, Jahveh, in another. But the truth set forth is the same in all, and the history is continuous and consistent. But it is not possible, without twisting and torturing, to place the chapters and verses into the divisions of the critics. In fact, the critics are not agreed as to the number of narratives or the divisions which require to be made. Some call in two writers, the Elohist and Jehovist; some, three; the majority, four; but some have to call in five or six in order to get all the passages allocated. Dr. Briggs has not spread out any such scheme before us. If it were drawn out in details and laid before us, every man would see the paddings at the junctions. The theory

is too far-fetched, is too ingenious and artificial, to be true.

I find Moses referred to or quoted upward of one hundred and twenty-five times in the Old and New Testaments, thirty-six times in the four Gospels, in the majority of the books of the Bible, in the Acts, in the Epistles of Paul, in Jude and Revelation. In all the places, he is spoken of as speaking or acting with authority. The belief of the Jews was that the earlier portion of the Bible—the law as opposed to the prophets—is sanctioned by our Lord as being by Moses. “If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead” (Luke xvi. 31). These authoritative declarations carry far more weight with me than the sharp dissections by which they would divide the Lord’s raiment instead of accepting it as an inheritance.

VIII.

WHITHER? *As to the poetical theory?* I acknowledge that there are parallelism and counterparts in Genesis, as there are through most parts of Scripture, as may be seen in the lines which are drawn out in the revised version of the Bible. The fact is, the poetry and the prose of the Hebrews do not differ so widely as those of the Western languages. When I had to read and examine the essays of students, I found that those whose reading had been chiefly in the Scriptures were apt to compose in couplets and antitheses, which I corrected, in order that a truly English style might be formed. Whether the writings be in poetry or prose, whether they be balanced or unbalanced, we must reach the assurance that they are true. I feel that the unity and consistency of the whole is an evi-

dence of its being constructed by one Divine Mind bringing all the parts together, as the builder combines the separate stones into one edifice.

I remember that when I was a student there was a vigorous attempt by some great scholars to divide Homer into a number of personalities. I was an enthusiastic admirer and lover of Homer, and I resented the attempt to dissect him, which seemed to me to imply the killing of the living man. I felt sure that the whole, with the exception of a few links of junction, was the product of one great genius. I rather think that the critics have now ceased to anatomize the great bard of Greece, and that he has been left a living man. I am convinced that in like manner the attempt to turn the Pentateuch into an anatomy will be seen to be a failure by all men of good sense—a quality not always possessed by the higher critics.

I have seen a good deal of these German professors. They live in their studies, they are most industrious and full of book-learning, but they often know little of the world beyond, and they construct theories utterly inconsistent with what we know of human character. They could tell you what was the price of grain brought from Egypt to Rome on the day on which Julius Cæsar was assassinated, but they know nothing of the price of the food in their kitchen—that they leave very wisely to their wives. To keep up their high reputation, they have to bring out some discovery or theory every year. Of Eichhorn, the father of the dissecting biblical critics, Dr. Briggs allows: "He did not always grasp the truth. He sometimes chased shadows and framed visionary theories, both in relation to the Old and New Testaments" [*Bib. Hist.*, p. 35]. The same may be said of his successors.

Our professor does not set a high value on the labors of Mr. Moody. "Mr. Moody and his followers are crude

in their theology ; they pursue false methods in the interpretation of Scripture, and therefore they spread abroad not a few serious errors, and, on the whole, work disorganization and confusion " [p. 3]. Though Mr. Moody may, on very rare occasions, misunderstand a passage, as not knowing Hebrew or Greek, yet from his thorough oneness and sympathy with the inspired writers, with Jesus, and with Paul, he preaches far deeper and richer truth than I have ever heard from German critics or their American disciples, and which comes home with power to the hearts both of sinners and of saints, and determines the whole future life and conduct.

Whether the thoughtless perceive it or not, these assertions as to the authenticity and integrity of Scripture are playing into the hands of Professor Huxley, who is leading us into the bogs of agnosticism, and there leaving us. I know a sophomore who has just finished Formal Logic, who is vain of his attainments and has constructed a dilemma : " If the inspired writers and Jesus did not know that Moses was not the author of the Pentateuch [as has been shown by the critics], then they are ignorant and we cannot believe them. Or, if they knew that he was not the author of the Pentateuch, and yet said that he was, then they were dishonest and we cannot believe them. The conclusion is, that we cannot believe them." Of course, the answer is, that they did know that Moses wrote the Pentateuch and proclaimed it.

But the objectors will here insinuate that I am not so good a Hebraist as to perceive the four different styles of the authors of the Pentateuch. I answer that, though I was at one time called to a theological chair in Edinburgh, my later studies have been in a different direction. But I have beside me our Dr. Green, who knows Hebrew as thoroughly as the critics, who has a fine literary discern-

ment, and he assures us that he cannot discern a difference of style sufficient to show a difference of authorship. I acknowledge at once that I am not the person to carry on this controversy. But I can refer to a discussion between Dr. Green, of Princeton, and Dr. Harper, of Yale, where both sides of the subject are fully set before us.

But before closing this section, I have to call attention to what, I am sure, is the great theological want of the age. Have we a learned and satisfactory work on the Inspiration of the Bible? We have some good orthodox books on the subject, but are they up to the scholarship of the day, and fitted to meet the difficulties of young men? It seems to me that we need a thoroughly erudite and comprehensive work: on the one hand, holding that "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness;" and, on the other hand, specifying the principles on which we are to proceed in denying that certain things recorded in Scripture, such as Solomon's harem, are to be accepted as they have not the sanction of God. This we owe to our young men in their present position, and is the most important work in which any theologian can be engaged.

Meanwhile, our logical sophomore produces a *reductio ad absurdum* which settles the whole subject by a parallel case.

IX.

WHITHER? *Who the author of?* The book is before me. I have to examine it by the principles laid down in it. It professes to be written by one accomplished man, just as the Pentateuch is spoken of as being written by

Moses. But the Higher Criticism searches it, and proves that it is the work of four (or five) men, who have been compacted by a very skilful editor.

a. There is an orthodox writer ("orthodox orthodox who believe in John Knox"), who has evidently been trained in the old faith, who believes the Bible to be literally and not loosely inspired, and who speaks in the highest terms of the Westminster Standards and the system of doctrine therein contained.

b. A Higher Critic, who has been trained under Dr. Dörner and the critics of Germany, who does not believe the Bible to be impeccable or without error, who has dissected it with a sharp knife, who is not favorable to the Princeton theology, and has detected the errors in the symbols of the Presbyterian Church and all other Churches.

c. A Charitable Man, who is not disposed to put man under rigid probation, who is willing to give a sinner who has not become perfect at death a chance in Hades, which Christ visited between his death and his resurrection.

d. An Æsthetic who is fond of large churches, of a large communion and a liturgical service, and who is anxious to bring about an acknowledged union of all the Churches, including the Roman Catholic.

It would not be very difficult to put each sentence of the book into its proper compartment. By a little pressing, squeezing, and stretching, and leaving a few rifts at the junctions, it could be shown that the four authors represent the four diverse characters of man and correspond to the four Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

It is vain to try to make the book appear to be written by one man, however accomplished. On the supposition of there being only one author, contradictions would appear everywhere:—Between the laudations of the Bible

and the doubts about it ; between the eulogiums of the Confession of Faith and Catechisms and the exposure of the errors in them ; between the Presbyterian profession and the desire for read prayers and a liturgy ; between the evident aversion to Popery and the willingness to form an alliance with it. Adopt the theory of the fourfold authorship and one editorship, and all disagreements disappear. The remarkable unity has been given by the varied accomplishments of the compiler.

P.S. As another exercise, the sophomore is ready to show that there is a fourfold authorship in this pamphlet.

X.

WHITHER ? *What of the Christian Evidences ?*

In the now extensive English-speaking countries the evidences of Christianity are drawn from two quarters : one External, the other Internal. The External include what are now called Miracles, among which are to be placed Prophecies. Dr. Briggs is not satisfied with the way in which Dr. Hodge and modern theologians prove the truth of the Christian religion. He seems to fall in with the modern notion that miracles are difficulties in the way of belief rather than arguments for it.

But it is a fact that the inspired writers do appeal to occurrences which show "powers" above the ordinary agency of man and nature. They are called "wonders," inasmuch as they call attention to the powers and signs. They are called "signs," in that they attest truth usually moral and spiritual. (Acts ii. 22 : Miracles, wonders, and signs.) It is clearly maintained in Scripture that there were such miracles wrought in the curing of organic diseases, in the raising of the dead, and the prediction of coming

events. They so run through the Word, that to cut them out, as the Arnold family would do, leaves the body torn and lifeless. The miracles can be substantiated so that they become one part of the evidences of the truth of Christianity.

In order to justify this argument, it may be noticed that there are two kinds of laws in nature. There is, first, the *Law of Cause and Effect*; as that matter attracts other matter, that fire burns, and the sun shines. If miracles were contrary to this law, we could not believe them. Though some of the German thinkers so represent them, they are not so; they have in God a cause adequate to produce them.

But there is another set of laws in nature, the *Laws of Uniformity*. The agencies working in nature are so arranged that they produce regularities such as the succession of day and night, the length of the year, the rotation of the seasons, the ages of the plant and animal. These are the product of arranged causes, but are not causes. Day does not produce night, nor night day. Spring does not produce summer, nor youth old age. Now miracles are not contrary to the law of cause and effect, which has no exceptions, but simply to the uniformity of nature, which may be shifted by higher agency.* They imply a divine power acting in a different way from that in which it acts in producing day and night. They are not contrary to any intuitive or universally established law. They can be proven by evidence, and, being so proven, they establish the truth of Christianity.

But we have, secondly, Internal Evidence. Especially, there is thorough adaptation of Christianity to man's nat-

* It would be out of place to explain the nature of these two kinds of laws here; but I may be allowed to say that this is done in my little work on *The Tests of Various Kinds of Truth*.

ure—to his moral nature—and his wants. This is by far the most convincing and the most persuasive of evidences; it comes home to every heart. I know that I am a sinner, and here is a Saviour provided. I feel that I am weak, but here I have strength. As we realize this, we say: Here is a man who told me all things that ever I did, who revealed to me all my nature; is not this the Christ? Both of these kinds of proof should be included in Apologetics, now held to be so important a part of a theological course. But Dr. Briggs is not sure that this is the method of the Westminster Standards, or that sanctioned by Scripture. He finds fault with the Princeton divines for following this plan. It is his principal charge against the two Hodges, that in doing so they have departed from the Standards.

The Reformers and the Westminster divines, in standing up for the Divine authority of Scripture, were particularly anxious to show that it did not depend on the Romish Church. “The authority of the Holy Scripture depends wholly on God.” But God says: “Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.” In seeking to obey this command they had not such a body of evidences as we now have from our moral nature, which has been carefully defined by such men as Butler, Kant, and Chalmers, and in innumerable works treating of the historical proof. It appears evident to me that they meant to appeal to what we now call the internal or subjective proof. “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.” *West. Con.*, I. 5. The Confession then calls in “the Holy Spirit bearing witness by and with the Word in our hearts.”

Dr. Briggs affirms that the Reformers and Westminster divines built on the *fides divina*, the divine evidence, of the testimony of the Spirit, and those who do not build with them abandon the work of the Reformation (p. 81); and Dr. A. Alexander and the Princeton divines are so charged. It is true that the end to be reached is a *fides divina*, which can be obtained only by the inward working of the power of the Spirit. But it is admitted that the Spirit does not now reveal to us any new truth. We need to have the truth presented to us and the evidence that it is the truth, according to the rules of evidence; and in answer to prayer the Spirit seals and makes it *fides divina*. To reverse this order is to fall in with Quakerism and Mysticism. He has fallen into confusion at this point, and blames the theologians for not doing the same.

I do not think that our professor has thrown any light on the evidences of Christianity, but I am pleased and elevated by what he says of Theophanies or God-Manifestations. We have such in nature. "The heavens declare the glory of God." "God left not himself without witness, in that he did good and gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness." We have such a theophany every morning as the sun rises, every spring as the plants burst out. These are natural manifestations. But we have also supernatural ones, as in the creation of man, the prophecy of the seed of the woman, the call of Abraham, the birth and death of the Son of God. These are just the higher miracles, the powers and signs and wonders, indicating clearly a power working above the uniformities of nature. Among the highest of these theosophies we have the volume of the Book relating and infallibly sanctioning the whole.

XI.

WHITHER ? *Are we in this life under Probation ?* Responsibility and Probation are two, or, when combined, they are one, of the great truths of the Religion of Nature. They are guaranteed by the conscience or moral reason. This truth is one of the most essential doctrines announced or implied in the volume of the Book from Genesis to Revelation, from the dealings of God with our first parents down to the judgment day. God "will render to every man according to his deeds," Rom. ii. 6. "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that everyone may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad," 1 Cor. v. 11. I could show that it has a place in the writings of the fathers, of the deeper mediæval theologians, and the reformers. It was expressed more fully when the Cambridge School unfolded the great principles of morality. It was enunciated more definitely by Butler and others, when deism appeared in the last century. It has now a fundamental position both in ethics and religion. It is by this truth that men are shut up into Christ.

But the professor in Union Theological Seminary tells us : "The doctrine that this life is a probation was not known to the Reformers or the Westminster divines. It is a doctrine that is inconsistent with Calvinistic principles. These represent that our race had a probation once for all in Adam at the beginning of human history, and were condemned for failure in that probation, so that we are a lost race, not under a probation, but under a curse, and needing above all things redemption through Jesus Christ" [p. 217]. If this is part of the system of doctrine in the Confession, it is time to add a supplement.

But Dr. Briggs might have seen that the Confession of Faith gives us the supplement: "All persons that have lived upon the earth shall appear before the tribunal of Christ to give an account of their thoughts, words, and deeds, and to receive according to what they have done in the body, whether good or evil."—*Con.*, XXXIII.

Paul does speak in one passage of our connection with Adam and of hereditary sinfulness, Rom. v. 12–27. Augustine, with his great speculative genius, has drawn out of it a comprehensive theory which is not all sanctioned by Scripture. Our sinful nature may have come down to us from Adam, but it is *our* sinful nature and *our* sin. "Wherefore as by one man sin entered into the world and death by sin, and so death passed on all men for that all have sinned," v. 12. These two statements should never be separated. I have inherited my sin from Adam—modern science attaches great importance to inheritance—but I have sinned myself. I do not know that I am required to repent of and confess the sin of Adam; I confess my own sin.

I can show that this doctrine of man's personal probation was the universal Puritan doctrine. Baxter and all of them speak thus: "We assure them that God will never say, Depart from me, ye workers of iniquity, if they do not first by iniquity depart from God, and that God will not damn them, except they first damn themselves by the obstinate final refusing and resisting of his mercy."—*Reasons for Ministers' using the Greatest Plainness.*

XII.

WHITHER? *As to the Middle State?* Dr. Briggs dwells on this subject more fully than on any other Scripture doctrine. I fear that he has got into difficulties. The Reformers and the Westminster divines had seen and been deeply impressed with the soul-ruining corruptions which had sprung from the Romish doctrine of Purgatory, and they uttered clear and decisive language as to what becomes of the soul at death. "The souls of believers, being then made perfect in holiness, are received into the highest heavens." "The souls of the wicked are cast into hell." "Besides these two places for souls separated from their bodies the Scripture acknowledgeth none."—*Con.*, XXXIII. In like manner, the Larger Catechism says of the members of the invisible Church that immediately after death "their souls are then made perfect in holiness and received into the highest heavens," Q. 86. The same statement is made in the Shorter Catechism: "The souls of believers are at their death made perfect in holiness and do immediately pass into glory," Q. 37. Dr. Briggs has declared: "I solemnly and sincerely receive and adopt the Westminster Confession of Faith as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures." He is not bound to every statement of the Confession, but he is bound to "the system of doctrine." But that the souls of believers are at their death made "perfect in holiness" is clearly a part of the "system of doctrine," as essential a part as any other doctrinal statement in the Confession.

Dr. Dorner had stated in regard to those who had died unbelieving: "If instead of repenting and being converted, instead of growing in knowledge of God as holy

and yet gracious in Christ, they prefer to continue in evil, then the form of their sin becomes more spiritual, more demoniacal in accordance with their state from which this world recedes farther and farther, and thus it ripens into judgment" [p. 211]. Our professor adopts this doctrine, but not altogether. He does not say that there is conversion after death. "It may be that there is no hope of regeneration after death or of the initiation of the order of salvation in the middle state" [p. 219]. On this point he has kept clear of the Andover heresy, which has so troubled the Congregational churches. Otherwise he has followed his German master. We feel it to be strange, when we read the passages quoted above from the Confession, to find him declaring that, "The Confession makes no such statement as this," that "sanctification becomes immediate at death;" "it does not say that man is made perfect at the moment of death" [p. 147].

It is important that we should know his doctrine, which is not that of "the system of doctrine." He opens: "The middle state must be opened up in the discussions that are in progress. There must be the fullest liberty in this debate" [p. 222]. "The question we have to determine as Calvinists is whether the divine grace is limited in its operation to this world of ours, whether the divine act of regeneration may take place in the middle state or not, whether any part of the order of salvation is carried on there or not, and if any part, what part" [p. 221]. In answering this question he comes to the conclusion: "Among infra-confessional errors the most serious is the neglect of the doctrine of the Middle State. The Confession of Faith and the Catechisms are meagre enough here" [p. 206]. He condemns the Protestant dogmatic divines who insist "on determining the fate of men immediately after death without regard to the doctrine of

the middle state" [p. 196]. He would have "an extension of the gracious operations of God into the Middle State, between death and the resurrection, where the order of salvation begun for infants and others in regeneration may be conducted through all the processes of justification by faith, adoption, and sanctification by repentance, and glorification in love and holiness in the communion of God and the Messiah" [p. 137]. He assures us that recent study "has held up the light of Christian ethics and shown that the doctrine of immediate sanctification at death is contrary to the Scriptures and the Creeds, and has filled the middle state with ethical contents as a place for Christian sanctification" [p. 286].

His doctrine is clearly before us. People must judge whether it is consistent with the system of doctrine contained in the Scriptures. For myself, I believe that there is very little said in Scripture about Hades. It is clear, however, that at death the soul is made perfect in the sense of being free from all sin. Without this holy separation it could not see God. Without holiness no man can see the Lord. But I am also inclined to believe that in the intermediate state, and throughout eternity, there will be a growth in the graces that abide, especially these three—faith, hope, and charity.

Objections may be taken to the doctrine elaborated by Dorner, virtually accepted by Andover, and followed out in part by our theological professor. So far as I see, it allows the possibility of the souls which believed on earth falling away and being lost in Hades. Protestant preachers exhort their hearers to repent and believe, and become holy and perfect, as there is no provision for this in the world to come. But they can do this no longer, as their hearers are told that there is some kind of probation being prolonged till the final judgment. Logically and, I fear,

practically, it must issue in some of the evils of Purgatory, which, always along with the priestly power of forgiving sins, is the most perilous tenet of the Church of Rome. It leads, I know that in fact it does, to prayers for the dead, for those who are not yet sanctified. It would go on, consequently, to a continuance of such prayers indefinitely, and to a provision being made by persons when living, or by their friends when they are dead, to secure, by pecuniary gifts to the Church, the continuance of these petitions till the judgment day, when the soul is made perfect.

XIII.

WHITHER? *What of the Unity of the Church?* Our Lord's prayer was, "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." The Romish Church, and perhaps, also, the Church of England, set too high a value comparatively on the doctrine of the Visible Church, and Protestants who have seceded from other Churches are inclined to attach too little importance to it. "I believe in the Holy Catholic Church." The Church that does not believe this is, so far, departing from the faith. The Church which so shuts itself up within itself that it does not acknowledge other Evangelical Churches is guilty of positive sin for which it will somehow or other be punished in this world.

Dr. Briggs is sincerely and hopefully anxious for a manifestation of the visible and real union of all the Churches of Christ. He would have an alliance with the Roman Catholics, though not with the Popish Church—he tries to distinguish between the two. There is no immediate prospect of this end being accomplished. The

Roman Catholic Church cannot separate itself from its popish head without disclaiming its infallibility and losing its succession. The Episcopal stands by its apostolic succession—through the Romish Church—and is willing to absorb other Churches but not to unite with them on a footing of equality. It is only by the mighty power of God that these difficulties can be removed. But there is a more practicable plan tending toward the higher final end. I could prove that the Constitution of the United States is so far formed on the Presbyterian models; in every sentence of the Mecklenburg Declaration, which helped to unite the United States, I hear the ring of the Solemn League and Covenant. We Presbyterians may now take a lesson from the American Constitution. If we cannot have a union, let us have a Confederation.

Let each Church retain its power of independent action. One Church must not be allowed to limit the usefulness of another. But each minister of a Church should have his special field, which he is required carefully to look after and to cultivate by all the proper Christian agencies. There is to be no such restriction as to forbid any minister from visiting his neighbor's field. But let each minister have a field for which he is responsible, that the gospel be preached in it to every creature, young and old. There is an awful responsibility lying on the Churches for not fulfilling the command to preach the gospel to every creature. Thousands are dying every day, not only in Heathen but in Christian countries, to whom the gospel has not been preached. Lest the judgments of heaven come upon them, let the Churches so understand each other and so arrange that the evangelical forces be not wasted by petty villages having each five or six churches working against each other rather than for Christ; and so that the joyful sound be heard by every

man, woman, and child, in the slums of our great cities, and over all the wide wastes of heathenism. Were I ten years younger I would join others in seeking to start such a FEDERATION.

XIV.

WHITHER? *In respect of Public Worship?* I am sorry that, with all his catholicity, Dr. Briggs, a teacher in the Presbyterian Church, should have so little of the old Presbyterian spirit. He is for a partial and voluntary Liturgy. He says: "I would prefer the use of a prayer-book for all the parts of common prayer at the Sabbath services with the exception of a brief prayer at the close of the services expressing the special needs of the congregation and the day" [p. 253]. But we all know the danger of formalism in worship. I should have no objection to one carefully prepared prayer in every service, to keep up the unity of the worship. But I believe that great advantage arises from the minister's expressing the common feelings of himself and his people in ordinary as well as in extraordinary circumstances.

He thinks that "the Presbyterian Churches of America should follow the Presbyterian Churches of Europe, and keep the Christian year" [p. 56]. He must be aware that in countries in which they observe days not prescribed in Scripture they are apt to neglect the Sabbath which is ordained of God.

"We must follow the example of the old world and the experience of centuries, and build great buildings that will hold several thousand worshippers, and furnish these churches with several ministers, distributing the work among them according to their several gifts" [p. 40].

This system of large churches is a good one in Romish countries, where the instruction of the people is very much addressed to the senses. It is the one adopted in Berlin, where its working is not effective. My landlady in Berlin went to one of the churches, I asked her if her minister ever visited her; she opened her eyes in astonishment, and said, "I am not a Catholic." I am quite willing that a minister with large preaching gifts should draw together as many as he can, but these people would not always care about attending the preaching of his colleagues. There is a better system. It was the one adopted in the ancient Church as soon as it was organized. They divided town and country into workable parishes. It is the parochial system of Scotland. I was able so to work it that in a population of upward of six thousand there were not a dozen people who did not go to the house of God. We must come back to this parochial method. Let there be a church capable of holding six or eight hundred, not more, in every parish in our cities. Let there be a minister for each, chosen by the people. Let him have elders, and deacons, and trained Sabbath-school teachers. Let him visit his people regularly, and pay special attention to the sick and the aged. Let him have an agency, male and female, for drawing in the careless and the out-cast. The Episcopalians are carrying on this system more effectively than the Presbyterians. The Presbyterians of Philadelphia are doing it more successfully than those of New York. The spiritual wastes of our country will never be reclaimed till we carry out this system all over the land.

XV.

WHITHER? *To a close.* I have answered the question put, and yet I have not answered it. I have done little more than show that it should be answered. It must be answered by the rising generation—by the professors in our hundred theological seminaries at home and abroad; by our theological students; by our Sabbath-school teachers; by our people, generally, in the kind of preaching they demand and encourage.

I have pointed out the need. Our theologians who are training our probationers must give the full answer; not in a reply to Dr. Briggs, but in establishing the truths which are being undermined in our day. It must be answered not by a *jeu d'esprit*, such as this pamphlet is, but by comprehensive learning, spiritual insight, and good sense. We do not need a refutation of old and effete heresies. There are errors that are deceased, and should not be raised from their graves. I have said that Unitarianism is dead, and is laid out for decent burial. But there are living heresies which must be met. I wish the professor would answer his own question, would resolve his own riddle, by doing as much for the establishment of truth as he has done for the exposure of error.

In this duel my opponent had the right to choose the weapons, and they have been rather light ones. When I see him settling the young in the faith I will throw away my weapons, never to take them up again, and will cheer him in what must be, with his talents, a successful and brilliant career. The *Where?* will then give a satisfactory answer to the *Whither?*

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