

Correct Copy

AN ANSWER

TO

DR. BRIGGS' "SHORTEST CATECHISM"

B. B. Warfield.

FROM

THE DETROIT FREE PRESS,

May 27th, 1891.

Note: This pamphlet was written by me, May 21st 1891 & placed in the hands of the Rev. Dr. G. W. F. Birch then in attendance at the General Assembly for his private information; but with liberty to make whatever use of it he chose. On that occasion, he printed it.

"THE SHORTEST CATECHISM." B. B. W.

Great interest has been awakened in church circles generally by the publication of what is now known as Dr. Briggs' catechism which his friends hoped would be accepted by the Presbyterian Church as a substitute for the larger and shorter catechisms of the Westminster Standards. Dr. Briggs' answers to this shortest catechism have been urged by his friends as a reason why the general assembly, now in session, should defer action and not veto his election as a professor in Union Seminary. The following review of Dr. Briggs' answers to this catechism has been furnished to THE FREE PRESS by Mr. John J. McCook, an elder in the Fifth Avenue Church, New York (Dr. John Hall, pastor), a commissioner from the presbytery of New York to the general assembly:

Dr. Briggs' Catechism.

The New York Tribune of May 20 (it also appears in The Evangelist of May 21) contained a brief catechism which the directors of Union Seminary laid, it seems, before Dr. Briggs, and with his answers to which they report that they listened with satisfaction. This catechism does not touch upon many matters as to which the Presbyterian Church would like to be informed more exactly of Dr. Briggs' opinions; it is therefore deficient, considered as a reply to the objections that have been raised as to his teachings. It is more important to observe, however, that in the matters upon which it does teach, the catechism does not raise the real issues under discussion but rather obtains answers to questions not at all or lit-

tle in dispute. The object of this brief paper is to point out how the questions might have been framed so as to give the church some information on the points at issue. For this purpose let us pass in review the questions that were asked and note how far each question really touches upon matters at issue and what answers Dr. Briggs would have given on the real issues, had the committee of the directors been so kind as to place them before him.

QUESTION FIRST. A.

"Do you consider the Bible, the Church and the Reason as co-ordinate sources of authority. Answer—No." What Dr. Briggs here denies is that he makes these three sources co-ordinate in the sense of *co-equal*; he does not deny that he makes each of them an *independent* source of knowledge of God, by which, apart from or in opposition to the others, we may savingly find God. But this latter is the real matter at issue. Hence the question needs modification, thus:

QUESTION AS IT OUGHT TO BE ASKED.—

"Do you teach that men may obtain that knowledge of God which is necessary for their salvation and find God savingly, by the Reason independently of and apart from the revelation of God given in the Scriptures; and therefore that the revelation of God given in His written Word is not necessary to salvation?"

DR. BRIGGS' ANSWER TO THIS QUESTION.—

"Martineau could not find Divine authority in the Church or the Bible, but he did find God enthroned in his own soul. There are

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those who would refuse these rationalists a place in the company of the faithful. But they forget that the essential thing is to find God ^{and} Divine certainty. * * *” (Inaugural Address, p. 27.) “Men are influenced by their temperaments and environments which of the ways of access to God they may pursue.” (Ibid., p. 28.) “If it be heresy to say that rationalists like Martineau have found God in the reason and Roman Catholics like Newman have found God in the church, I rejoice in such heresy, and I do not hesitate to say that I have less doubt of the salvation of Martineau or Newman than I have of the modern pharisees who would exclude such noble men—so pure, so grand, the ornaments of Great Britain and the prophets of the age—from the kingdom of God.”—(New York Herald, May 15, 1891)

“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 the 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.”—(Inaugural address, 2nd ed., pp. 88-89)

QUESTION FIRST. B.

“Do you believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the only infallible rule of faith and practice? Answer, yes.” Here Dr. Briggs merely affirms that there are no other rules of faith and practice to which the epithet “infallible” can be applied except the Scriptures. But he does not affirm that there are no other sufficient rules of faith and practice by which men may be led to salvation. Nor does he point out in what sense and to what degree the term “infallible” is applied to Scripture. In other words, the questions at issue are not here determined. The question needs amending so as to read thus:

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elation of that knowledge of God and of His will which is necessary to salvation; and therefore the only sufficient rule of faith and practice?”

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“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.”—(Inaugural Address, 2d ed. p. 89.

[See also answers to question 1, A.]

QUESTION SECOND.

“When you use the term ‘The Reason,’ do you include the conscience and the religious feeling? Ans.—Yes.” In his answer to this question Dr. Briggs merely affirms that when he says men find God savingly through the Reason, he intends to include all purely natural faculties and means under that term, and to refer to all sources of the theistic inference and of the religious feeling. But this is not at all the question at issue; which concerns not whether ‘reason’ is both in a broad or narrow sense, but whether man by ‘reason’ alone in however broad a sense, can so ‘find God’ as to be saved. The question needs restatement, thus:

QUESTION AS IT OUGHT TO HAVE BEEN ASKED—“When you speak of men ‘finding God’ through the forms of the Reason, in however broad a sense, do you mean merely that they thus obtain some knowledge of God, or do you mean that they may obtain such a knowledge of God and of His ~~will~~ as is sufficient unto salvation?”

DR. BRIGGS’ ANSWER TO THIS QUESTION—“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."—(Inaugural Address, 2nd ed., p. 89.)

"Martineau could not find God in the church or in the Bible, but he did find God enthroned in his own soul." * * * "If it be heresy to say that rationalists like Martineau have found God in the reason. * * * I rejoice in such heresy, and I do not hesitate to say that I have less doubt of the salvation of Martineau * * * than I have of the modern Pharisees who would exclude such noble men * * * from the Kingdom of God."—(Inaugural Address, p. 27, and New York Herald, May 11, 1891.)

(See also above in answer to question 1.)

QUESTION THIRD.

"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." Here the question is so framed as to confine the affirmative reply to an affirmation of such divine direction as secured an infallible record of God's "revelations" only, not necessarily of all God's revelations, but only of those "in respect to faith and doctrine." Nothing is affirmed of the inspiration of the record of God's revelations as to matters of fact. Nothing is affirmed as to the inspiration of such parts of the Scriptures as are not "records of God's revelations." And no definition is given of "infallible record," even as so limited. In other words, the real issues that have been raised are not here raised and a useless question is asked. It needs to be amended somewhat as follows:

QUESTION THAT OUGHT TO BE ASKED—

"Would you accept the following as a satisfactory definition of inspiration? '*Inspiration is such a special and extraordinary, and immediate ~~and~~ divine superintendence of the whole process of the writing of the scriptures as constitutes them, consisting*

of all the ~~bulk~~ ^{books} of the old and new Testament, ~~(written)~~ ^{as given} by inspiration of God, the Word of God written, which he has committed wholly to writing, and which ought, therefore, to be believed and obeyed, because God (who is truth itself) is the author thereof.'

QUESTION:

DR. BRIGGS' ANSWER TO THIS WAS—"The time has come when the shibboleth of the older apologetic, 'The Bible is the Word of God,' ~~are~~ ^{is} ~~out~~ against 'The Bible contains the Word of God,' and should be abandoned." "Hence the author is correct in his statement: * * * 'But in the higher and more distinctively religious meaning of the word, it is not the Biblical books throughout—it is only the Word of God which is in the Biblical books—that can be spoken of as *inspired*' (p. 372.) Whatever does not belong to that divine organism is purely formal and circumstantial and not inspired. How shall this living divine organism of truth be discriminated from its formal envelope?"

← "The *absolute* divine truth in the Bible must be discriminated from the relative truths in which it is enveloped, or in other words, the divine substance has been given in human forms, and no one will truly understand the Bible until he has learned to distinguish between this temporal, circumstantial and variable form, and the eternal, essential and permanent substance." (Presbyterian Review, 1884, pp. 381, 384, 385.) "We cannot, in the symbolical or historical use of the term, call this providential care of His Word, or superintendence over its external protection—inspiration. Such providential care and superintendence is ~~only~~ ^{not} different in kind with regard to the Word of God, the visible church of God, or the power of the Sacraments." (Biblical Study, p. 161.) "These errors are all in the circumstantials and not in the essentials; they are in the human setting and not in the precious jewel itself; they are found in that section of the Bible that theologians commonly account for from the providential superintendence of the

mind of the author, as distinguished from divine revelation itself. It may be that this providential superintendence gives infallible guidance in every particular; and it may be that it differs but little, if at all, from the providential superintendence of the fathers and schoolmen and theologians of the Christian Church. It is not important for the present purpose that we should decide the question. If we should abandon the whole field of providential superintendence so far as inspiration and divine authority are concerned and limit divine inspiration and authority to the essential contents of the Bible, to its religion, faith and morals, we should still have ample room to seek divine authority where alone it is essential, or even important, in the teaching that guides our devotions, our thinking and our conduct.”—(Inaugural Address, pp. 35-36.*)

“It is not to be presumed that divine inspiration lifted the author above his age any more than was necessary to convey the divine declaration and the divine instruction with infallible certainty to mankind. ~~A~~ question of credibility is to be distinguished from infallibility. The form is credible, the substance alone is infallible.”—(Whither, p. 72.)

QUESTION FOURTH.

“Do you believe the Bible inerrant in all matters concerning faith and practice, and in everything in which it is a revelation from God or a vehicle of divine truth, and that there are no errors that disturb its infallibility in these matters, or in its record of the historic events and institutions with which they are inseparably connected? Answer—Yes.” This question is so framed as to confine the affirmation of inerrancy to the substance of faith and practice, to the

*What Dr. Briggs expresses with an “if” in the Inaugural Address he asserts as fact in the Presbyterian Review, as above quoted, teaching that inspiration does not extend to anything beyond the substance, and abandoning it for the whole of what he calls formal and circumstantial, i. e., apparently for the whole form of Scripture as distinguished from its contents.

communication of direct revelation from God, and to such historic events and institutions as are inseparably connected with these matters. Errors are not denied to exist even in that element of the Bible that delivers doctrine and regulations for life; but only such errors as would disturb its infallibility in these matters, of ~~the~~ when dealt with so as to separate the absolute kernel from the relative husk, as outlined in the passages quoted above under question three. Errors further, are not denied to exist in Biblical history; but only in the records of those historic events and institutions which (in Dr. Briggs’ judgment) are especially connected with the substance of divine truth as to faith and practice. This does not bring out the question at issue. The question should rather have been framed thus:

QUESTION AS IT OUGHT TO HAVE BEEN ASKED—“Do you believe the Holy Scripture, consisting of all the books of the Old and New Testaments, to be (as the Word of God, Who is truth itself, the author thereof) of infallible truth in all its affirmations, so as that, as a Christian man, you believe to be true whatsoever is delivered therein, for the authority of God himself speaking therein?”

DR. BRIGGS’ ANSWER TO THIS QUESTION—“It is sheer assumption to claim that the original documents were inerrant. No one can be persuaded to believe in the inerrancy of scripture, except by a priori considerations from the elaboration of the doctrine of verbal inspiration.”—(Whither, p. 68.)

“The doctrine of the inerrancy of Scripture is in conflict with biblical criticism. It seems to me that no candid mind without invincible dogmatic prepossessions can doubt that there is an error of citation in Matt. xxvii., 9, that goes back to the original autographs. The question of credibility is to be distinguished from infallibility. The form is credible, the substance alone is infallible.”—(Whither, pp. 71, 72.)

“I shall venture to affirm that, so far as I

can see, there are errors in the Scriptures that no one has been able to explain away, and the theory that they were not in the original text is sheer assumption, upon which no mind can rest with certainty. If such errors destroy the authority of the Bible, it is already destroyed for historians.”—(Inaugural Address, p. 35.)

“In *Biblical Study and Whither?* I limited myself to two errors of citation. I have not taken a brief to prove the errancy of Scripture. Conservative men should hesitate before they force the critics in self-defense to make a catalogue of errors in the Bible.”—(Inaugural Address, 2d ed., p. 95.)

QUESTION FIFTH.

“Do you believe that the miracles recorded in Scripture are due to an extraordinary exercise of divine energy, either directly or indirectly through holy men? Answer—Yes.” The question is so phrased as that the answer affirms nothing more than that God is somehow (directly or indirectly) concerned in the production of miracles, and that they are not every-day phenomena. But these are not the questions at issue. The question should have been framed thus:

QUESTION AS IT OUGHT TO HAVE BEEN ASKED—“Do you believe that the miracles recorded in Scripture are wrought by the immediate power of God and so clearly exhibit the presence of God with the messenger in whose authentication they are wrought, as that though we believe not *Nim* we must believe the works, though we believe not the words spoken we must believe for the very works’ sake?”

DR. BRIGGS’ ANSWER TO THIS QUESTION—“If it were possible to resolve all the miracles of the Old Testament into extraordinary acts of Divine Providence, using the forces and forms of nature in accordance with the laws of nature; and if we could explain all the miracles of Jesus, His unique authority over man and over nature, from His use of mind^o cure, or hypnotism, or any other occult power—still I claim that nothing essential would be lost from the

miracles of the Bible; they would still remain the most wonderful exhibition of loving purpose and redemptive acts of God and of the tenderness and grace of the Messiah’s heart.” (Inaugural Address, p. 37.)

“The study of the miracles of the Bible has convinced me that they may be explained from the presence of God in nature in varied forms of Theophany and Christophany, for when God is present we may expect manifestations of divine authority and power.”—(Do., p. 38.)

QUESTION SIXTH.

“Do you hold what is commonly known as the doctrine of a future probation? Do you believe in purgatory? Answer—No (to both).” The question is so framed as not to raise the questions at issue. Dr. Briggs is understood to hold the Augustinian doctrine of the fall, and that, therefore, mankind had its sole probation, properly so called, in Adam: man has, therefore, no true probation in this life and, accordingly, no future probation in the next life. And as he does not teach “what is commonly known” as the doctrine of a “future probation,” so neither is he charged with teaching the historical doctrine of “purgatory.” To bring out the matters at issue, the questions should have been framed thus:

QUESTIONS AS THEY OUGHT TO HAVE BEEN ASKED—“A. Do you hold that all the conscious operations of grace may be undergone after death, in the intermediate state? B. Do you believe that saved souls may enter the intermediate state unprepared for Heaven and needing an extended period of preparation to fit them for it?”

DR. BRIGGS’ ANSWERS TO THESE QUESTIONS.—“Another fault of Protestant theology is in its limitation of the process^o 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. * * * We look with hope and joy for the continuation of the processes of grace, as the wonders of re-

demption in the company of the blessed, to which the faithful are all hastening." (Inaugural Address, page 55.) "There is no salvation without personal faith. * * * There is but one way of salvation for all, one *ordo salutis*. There is but one kind of justification, one kind of sanctification, one kind of saving faith, and one kind of repentance unto life. * * * It is not difficult to understand that the Divine Spirit may regenerate all the elect in the world and plant within them the seeds of faith and repentance, so that redemption may have its beginning here for infants and incapables. * * * The salvation which is begun here by regeneration is carried on there. For the vast majority of our race who die in infancy or have lived beyond the range of the means of grace, the salvation begun in this life by regeneration is carried on in the intermediate state with the exercise of personal faith in Christ, whom they know there for the first. * * * Not till then are they justified, for there can be no justification without faith for them any more than for others. The intermediate state is for them a state of blessed possibilities of redemption." (Magazine of Christian Literature, December, 1889, pp. 110, 111.)

"The doctrine of immediate justification and sanctification at death involves the conceit that the child who died in infancy a few moments after birth is immediately justified and sanctified, receives saving faith and all the Christian graces in an instant. * * * If this were so, then blessed are those who die in infancy and thus outstrip their fellows in the Christian race. Vastly better to be born to die than to be born to live in this uncertain world. What parent would not prefer to lay all his children in an early grave assured of their salvation than expose them to the dreadful risks of life and the possibility of eternal damnation? According to the current beliefs those Chinese mothers who put their children to death make more Christians

than all the missionaries." (Inaugural Address, second edition, p. 105.)

B. "The intermediate state is, therefore, for all believers, without exception, a state for *their sanctification*. They are there trained in the school of Christ, and are prepared for the Christian perfection which they must attain ere the judgment day." (Magazine of Christian Literature, December, 1889, p. 112.) "The Roman Catholic doctrine of purgatory is a perversion of the true doctrine. * * * There is much truth and some comfort in the midst of its errors. * * * It is less mechanical and less unethical than the theory that has prevailed among Protestants that there is both immediate justification and immediate sanctification in the article of death." (Do., p. 113.) "Sanctification has two sides—mortification and vivication. * * * It is the work of sanctification to overcome sin in the higher nature. We may justly hold that the evil which begins in the higher moral nature of believers will be suppressed and modified, with an energy of repentance, humiliation, confession and determination that will be more powerful than ever before, because it will be stimulated by the presence of Christ and the saints. If it were possible that sanctification at death would make men so perfect in holiness as to remove all evil tendencies and habits and not only destroy their disposition to sin, etc." (Do. p. 114.)

QUESTION SEVENTH.

"Do you believe that the issues of this life are final, and that a man who dies unrepentant will have no further opportunity of salvation? Answer—Yes." This question was worth asking and appears to bring out a fact of importance in Dr. Briggs' teaching. We rejoice to believe that Dr. Briggs has thus cleared his skirts of one of the charges brought against him. We understand him to teach that the final destiny of all men is already determined in this life; that regeneration takes place invariably before death and that accordingly the great

gulf fixed between the saved and lost is in the next life impassable.

QUESTION EIGHTH.

"Is your theory of progressive sanctification such as will permit you to say that you believe that when a man dies in the faith, he enters the middle state regenerated, justified and sinless? Answer—Yes." "*Such as will permit you to say*"—"When a man dies in the faith"—"regenerated, justified and sinless" All these are limiting and undefined clauses which destroy the usefulness of this question. Prof. Briggs will no doubt affirm of a man *dying a believer* that he is already *justified* and in that sense imputatively *sinless*. He does not affirm here that the terms employed are the natural ones to express his theory as to the middle state; or that he is permitted by his theory to say of *all* the saved that they enter the middle state "regenerated, justified and sinless;" or that his theory will permit him to say of ^{over} ~~him~~ a man who "dies in the faith," that he enter the middle state "sinless" in any other than the *imputative* sense. For Dr. Briggs uses the term "sinless" in this sense: "Believers," he says, (Magazine of Christian Literature, December, 1889, p. 114), "who enter the middle state, enter *sinless*;" and this he immediately defines as follows: "They are pardoned and justified; they are mantled in the blood and righteousness of Christ; and nothing will be able to separate them from His love. * * * But they are still the same persons, with all the gifts and graces, and also *all the evil habits* of the mind, disposition and temper they had when they left the world." Accordingly, he substitutes "guiltless" for "sinless" in the enlarged statement given in the appendix to his *inaugural address*. The question therefore fails to raise the question at issue. The question should take the following form :

QUESTION AS IT SHOULD BE ASKED: "Is your theory of progressive sanctification such as is consistent with the affirmation that all those who are to be saved enter the middle state cleansed from all pollution of sin, with all evil tendencies and dispositions removed, and in such a sense perfect in holiness, as that remainders of sin no longer cling to them?"

DR. BRIGGS' ANSWER TO THIS QUESTION. —"Believers who enter the middle state. * * * are still the same persons, with all the gifts and graces, and also the evil habits of mind, dispositions and temper they had when they left the world. It is unpsychological to suppose that these will be changed in the moment of death. It is the manichean heresy to hold that sin belongs to the physical organization, and is laid aside with the body. * * * The Plymouth brethren hold that there are two natures in the redeemed, the old man and the new. In accordance with such a theory the old man might be cast off at death. Sin, as our Savior teaches, has its source in the heart, in the higher and immortal part of man. It is the intent of sanctification to overcome sin in the higher nature. We may justly hold that the evil that still lingers in the higher moral nature of believers will be suppressed and modified with an energy of repentance, confession and determination that will be more powerful than ever before because it will be stimulated by the presence of Christ and His saints, etc."—(Magazine of Christian Literature, December, 1889, page 114.)

This brief catechism we repeat cannot settle all questions. But so far as it goes it seems to bring the truth of Dr. Briggs' teaching before us. These things cannot be explained away. They must be *retracted* or *abided by*.

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GREAT INTEREST has been awakened in church circles generally by the publication of what is known as Dr. Briggs' catechism, which some of his friends hoped would be accepted by the Presbyterian Church as a substitute for the Larger and Shorter Catechisms of the Westminster Standards. Dr. Briggs' answers to this shortest catechism have been urged by his friends as a reason why the General Assembly, now in session, should defer action and not veto his election as a professor in Union Seminary. The following review of Dr. Briggs' answers to this catechism has been furnished to THE FREE PRESS by Mr. John J. McCook, an elder in the Fifth Avenue Church, New York (Dr. John Hall, pastor), a commissioner from the Presbytery of New York to the General Assembly.*

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[* The subjoined paper was written by Professor Warfield on May 21st, and placed in the hands of a friend for his personal information, but with liberty "to make whatever use of it he chose." In the exercise of this liberty, and in the desire not to commit Prof. Warfield without consultation with him, it was printed anonymously in *The Detroit Free Press* of May 27th. On the issue of this reprint, Prof. Warfield has expressed a desire to have the anonymousness removed, as he has no unwillingness to assume the responsibility of the entire contents of the paper.]

Mr. J. J. McCook who was attending to the case of Dr. Briggs, to whom this reprint was proposed, finally objected so strongly to its publication with this note, (article which I was not willing to have it reviewed, because of my strong dislike to anonymous publications in a country) that the reprint never fit out of press & has never been issued. B. B. Warfield

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* * *” (*Inaugural Address*, p. 27.) “Men are influenced by their temperaments and environments which of the three ways of access to God they may pursue.” (*Ibid.*, p. 28.) “If it be heresy to say that rationalists like Martineau have found God in the reason, and Roman Catholics like Newman have found God in the church, I rejoice in such heresy, and I do not hesitate to say that I have less doubt of the salvation of Martineau or Newman than I have of the

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QUESTION FIRST, B.

“Or do you believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the only infallible rule of faith and practice? Answer—Yes.” Here Dr. Briggs merely affirms that there are no other rules of faith and practice to which the epithet “infallible” can be applied besides the Scriptures. But he does not affirm that there are no other sufficient rules of faith and practice by which men may be led to salvation. Nor does he point out in what sense and to what degree the term “infallible” is applicable to Scripture. In other words, the questions at issue are not here determined. The question needs amending so as to read thus :

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“When you use the term ‘Reason,’ do you include the conscience and the religious feeling? Ans.—Yes.” In his answer to this question Dr. Briggs merely affirms that when he says men find God savingly through the Reason, he intends to include all purely natural faculties and means under that term, and to refer to all sources of the theistic inference and of the religious feeling. But this is not at all the question at issue; which concerns not whether ‘reason’ is used in a broad or narrow sense, but whether man by ‘reason’ alone in however broad a sense, can so ‘find God’ as to be saved. The question needs restatement, thus:

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(See also above in answer to Question 1.)

QUESTION THIRD.

“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 revelation in respect to both fact and doctrine.*’ Answer—Yes.” Here the question is so framed as to confine the affirmative reply to an affirmation of such divine direction as secured an infallible record of God’s “revelation” only; not

necessarily of all God's revelations, but only of those "in respect to both fact and doctrine." Nothing is affirmed as to the inspiration of such parts of the Scriptures as are not a "record of God's revelation." And no definition is given of "infallible record," even as so limited. In other words, the real issues that have been raised are not here raised, and a useless question is asked. It needs to be amended somewhat as follows :

QUESTION THAT OUGHT TO BE ASKED.—"Would you accept the following as a satisfactory definition of inspiration? 'Inspiration is such a special and extraordinary and immediate divine superintendence of the whole process of the writing of the Scriptures as constitutes them, consisting of all the books of the Old and New Testament (as given by inspiration of God) the Word of God written, which he has committed wholly to writing, and which ought, therefore, to be believed and obeyed, because God (who is truth itself) is the author thereof.'"

DR. BRIGGS' ANSWER TO THIS QUESTION.—"The time has come when the shibboleth of the older apologetic, 'The Bible *is* the Word of God,' over against 'The Bible *contains* the Word of God,' should be abandoned.' "Hence the author is correct in his statement: * * * 'But in the higher and more distinctively religious meaning of the word, it is not the biblical books throughout,—it is only the Word of God which is in the Biblical books,—that can be spoken of as *inspired*' (p. 372). Whatever does not belong to that divine organism is purely formal and circumstantial and not inspired. How then shall this living divine organism of truth be discriminated from its formal envelope?" "The *absolute* divine truth in the Bible must be discriminated from the relative truths in which it is enveloped, or, in other words, the divine substance has been given in human forms, and no one will truly understand the Bible until he has learned to distinguish between this temporal, circumstantial, and variable form, and the eternal, essential, and permanent substance." (*Presbyterian Review*, 1884, pp. 381, 384, 385). "We cannot, in the symbolical or historical use of the term call this providential care of His Word or superintendence over its external production—inspiration. Such providential care and superintendence is not different in kind with regard to the Word of God, the visible church of God, or the forms of the sacraments." (*Biblical Study*, p. 161.)

“These errors are all in the circumstantial and not in the essentials; they are in the human setting, not in the precious jewel itself; they are found in that section of the Bible that theologians commonly account for from the providential superintendence of the mind of the author, as distinguished from divine revelation itself. It may be that this providential superintendence gives infallible guidance in every particular; and it may be that it differs but little, if at all, from the providential superintendence of the fathers and schoolmen and theologians of the Christian Church. It is not important for the present purpose that we should decide this question. If we should abandon the whole field of providential superintendence so far as inspiration and divine authority are concerned and limit divine inspiration and authority to the essential contents of the Bible, to its religion, faith, and morals, we would still have ample room to seek divine authority where alone it is essential, or even important, in the teaching that guides our devotions, our thinking, and our conduct.”—(*Inaugural Address*, pp. 35-36*.) “It is not to be presumed that divine inspiration lifted the author above his age any more than was necessary to convey the divine declaration and the divine instruction with infallible certainty to mankind. The question of credibility is to be distinguished from infallibility. The form is credible, the substance alone is infallible.” (*Whither?*, p. 72.)

QUESTION FOURTH.

“Do you believe the Bible to be inerrant in all matters concerning faith and practice and in everything in which it is a revelation from God, or a vehicle of divine truth, and that there are no errors that disturb its infallibility in these matters, or in its records of the historic events and institutions with which they are inseparably connected? Answer.—Yes.” This question is so framed as to confine the affirmation of inerrancy to the substance of faith and practice, to the communication of direct revelation from God, and to such historic events and institutions as are inseparably connected with these mat-

* What Dr. Briggs expresses with an “if” in the *Inaugural Address* he asserts as fact in the *Presbyterian Review*, as above quoted, teaching that inspiration does not extend to anything beyond the *substance*, and abandoning it for the whole of what he calls *formal and circumstantial*, i. e., apparently for the whole *form* of Scripture as distinguished from its *contents*.

ters. Errors are not denied to exist even in that element of the Bible that delivers doctrine and regulations for life; but only *such errors as would disturb its infallibility in these matters*, of course, when dealt with so as to separate the absolute kernel from the relative husk, as outlined in the passages quoted above under Question three. Errors further, are not denied to exist in the Biblical history; but only in the records of *those historic events and institutions which* (in Dr. Briggs' judgment) *are inseparably connected with the substance of divine truth as to faith and practice*. This does not bring out the question at issue. The question should rather have been framed thus:

QUESTION AS IT OUGHT TO HAVE BEEN ASKED.—“Do you believe the Holy Scripture, consisting of all the books of the Old and New Testaments, to be (as the Word of God, who is truth itself, the author thereof) of infallible truth in all its affirmations, so as that, as a Christian man, you believe to be true whatsoever is delivered therein, for the authority of God himself speaking therein?”

DR. BRIGGS' ANSWER TO THIS QUESTION.—“It is sheer assumption to claim that the original documents were inerrant. No one can be persuaded to believe in the inerrancy of Scripture, except by *a priori* considerations from the elaboration of the doctrine of verbal inspiration.”—(*Whither?*, p. 68.) “The doctrine of the inerrancy of Scripture is in conflict with biblical criticism. It seems to me that no candid mind without invincible dogmatic prepossessions can doubt that there is an error of citation in Matt. xxvii., 9, that goes back to the original autographs. The question of credibility is to be distinguished from infallibility. The form is credible, the substance alone is infallible.”—(*Whither?*, pp. 71, 72.) “I shall venture to affirm that, so far as I can see, there are errors in the Scriptures that no one has been able to explain away; and the theory that they were not in the original text is sheer assumption, upon which no mind can rest with certainty. If such errors destroy the authority of the Bible, it is already destroyed for historians.”—(*Inaugural Address*, p. 35.) “In *Biblical Study and Whither?* I limited myself to two errors of citation. I have not taken a brief to prove the errancy of Scripture. Conservative men should hesitate before they force the critics in self-defense to make a catalogue of errors in the Bible.”—(*Inaugural Address*, 2d ed., p. 95.)

QUESTION FIFTH.

“Do you believe that the miracles recorded in the Scriptures are due to an extraordinary exercise of divine energy, either directly or mediately through holy men? Answer—Yes.” The question is so phrased as that the answer affirms nothing more than that God is somehow (directly or indirectly) concerned in the production of miracles, and that they are not every-day phenomena. But these are not the questions at issue. The question should have been framed thus :

QUESTION AS IT OUGHT TO HAVE BEEN ASKED.—“Do you believe that the miracles recorded in the Scriptures were wrought by the immediate power of God, and so clearly exhibit the presence of God with the messenger in whose authentication they were wrought, as that though we believe not him we must believe the works, though we believe not the words spoken we must believe for the very works’ sake?”

DR. BRIGGS’ ANSWER TO THIS QUESTION.—“If it were possible to resolve all the miracles of the Old Testament into extraordinary acts of Divine Providence, using the forces and forms of nature in accordance with the laws of nature; and if we could explain all the miracles of Jesus, His unique authority over man and over nature, from His use of mind cure, or hypnotism, or any other occult power, —still I claim that nothing essential would be lost from the miracles of the Bible; they would still remain the most wonderful exhibition of loving purpose and redemptive acts of God and of the tenderness and grace of the Messiah’s heart.”—(*Inaugural Address*, p. 37.) “The study of the miracles of the Bible has convinced me that they may be explained from the presence of God in nature, in varied forms of Theophany and Christophany, for where God is present we may expect manifestations of divine authority and power.”—(*Do.*, p. 38.)

QUESTION SIXTH.

“Do you hold what is commonly known as the doctrine of a future probation? Do you believe in purgatory? Answer—No (to both).” The question is so framed as not to raise the questions at issue. Dr. Briggs is understood to hold the Augustinian doctrine of the fall, and that, therefore, mankind had its sole probation, properly so

called, in Adam; man has, therefore, no true probation in this life and, accordingly, no future probation in the next life. And as he does not teach "what is commonly known" as the doctrine of a "future probation," so neither is he charged with teaching the historical doctrine of "purgatory." To bring out the matters at issue, the questions should have been framed thus :

QUESTIONS AS THEY OUGHT TO HAVE BEEN ASKED.—"A. Do you hold that all the conscious operations of grace may be undergone after death, in the intermediate state? B. Do you believe that saved souls may enter the intermediate state unprepared for Heaven, and needing an extended period of preparation to fit them for it?"

DR. BRIGGS' ANSWERS TO THESE QUESTIONS.—A. "Another fault of Protestant theology is in its limitation of the process 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. * * * We look with hope and joy for the continuation of the processes of grace, and the wonders of redemption in the company of the blessed, to which the faithful are all hastening."—(*Inaugural Address*, page 53-54.) "There is no salvation without personal faith. * * * There is but one way of salvation for all, one *ordo salutis*. There is but one kind of justification, one kind of sanctification, one kind of saving faith, and one kind of repentance unto life. * * * It is not difficult to understand that the Divine Spirit may regenerate all the elect in this world, and plant within them the seeds of faith and repentance, so that redemption may have its beginning here for infants and incapables. * * * The salvation which is begun here by regeneration is carried on there. For the vast majority of our race who die in infancy or have lived beyond the range of the means of grace, their salvation begun in this life by regeneration is carried on in the Intermediate State with the exercise of personal faith in Christ, whom they know there for the first. * * * Not till then are they justified, for there can be no justification without faith for them any more than for others. The Intermediate State is for them a state of blessed possibilities of redemption."—(*Magazine of Christian Literature*, December, 1889, pp. 110, 111.) "The doctrine of immediate justification and sanctification at death involves the conceit that the child who dies in infancy a few moments after birth is imme-

diately justified and sanctified, receives saving faith and all the Christian graces in an instant. * * * If this were so, then blessed are those who die in infancy, and thus outstrip their fellows in the Christian race. Vastly better to be born to die, than to be born to live in this uncertain world. What parent would not prefer to lay all his children in an early grave, assured of their salvation, rather than expose them to the dreadful risks of life and the possibility of eternal damnation? According to the current beliefs, those Chinese mothers who put their children to death make more Christians than all the missionaries."—(*Inaugural Address*, second edition, p. 105.)

B. "The Intermediate State is, therefore, for all believers, without exception, a state for *their sanctification*. They are there trained in the school of Christ, and are prepared for the Christian perfection which they must attain ere the judgment day."—(*Magazine of Christian Literature*, December, 1889, p. 112). "The Roman Catholic doctrine of purgatory is a perversion of the true doctrine. * * * There is much truth and some comfort in the midst of its errors. * * * It is less mechanical and less unethical than the theory that has prevailed among Protestants that there is both immediate justification and immediate sanctification in the article of death." (*Do.*, p. 113). "Sanctification has two sides—mortification and vivification. * * * It is the work of sanctification to overcome sin in the higher nature. We may justly hold that the evil which lingers in the higher moral nature of believers will be suppressed and modified, with an energy of repentance, humiliation, confession and determination that will be more powerful than ever before, because it will be stimulated by the presence of Christ and the saints. * * * If it were possible that sanctification at death would make men so perfect in holiness as to remove all evil tendencies and habits, and not only destroy their disposition to sin, but so lift them above temptation that they would be not only like our Savior during his earthly life, *posse non peccare*, but also like our Savior after he had sanctified himself and risen victor over sin, death, and Satan, and attained the position of *non posse peccare*; even then they would only have accomplished the negative side of sanctification, the mortification or entire putting to death the old man of sin."—(*Do.*, p. 114.)

QUESTION SEVENTH.

“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.” This question was worth asking and appears to bring out a fact of importance in Dr. Briggs’ teaching. We rejoice to believe that Dr. Briggs has thus cleared his skirts of one of the charges brought against him. We understand him to teach that the final destiny of all men is already determined in this life; that regeneration takes place invariably before death; and that accordingly the great gulf fixed between the saved and lost is in the next life impassable.

QUESTION EIGHTH.

“Is your theory of progressive sanctification such as will permit you to say that you believe that when a man dies in the faith he enters the middle state regenerated, justified and sinless? Answer—Yes.” “*Such as will permit you to say*”—“*when a man dies in the faith*”—“*regenerated, justified and sinless.*” All these are limiting and undefined clauses which destroy the usefulness of this question. Prof. Briggs will no doubt affirm of a man *dying a believer* that *he* is already *justified* and in that sense, imputatively, *sinless*. He does not affirm here that the terms employed are the natural ones to express his theory as to the middle state; or that he is permitted by his theory to say of *all* the saved that they enter the middle state “regenerated, justified and sinless;” or that his theory will permit him to say of even a man who “dies in the faith,” that he enters the middle state “sinless” in any other than the *imputative* sense. For Dr. Briggs uses the term “sinless” in this sense: “Believers,” he says (*Magazine of Christian Literature*, December, 1889, p. 114), “who enter the Middle State, enter *sinless* ;” and this he immediately defines as follows: “They are pardoned and justified; they are mantled in the blood and righteousness of Christ; and nothing will be able to separate them from his love. * * * But they are still the same persons, with all the gifts and graces and also *all the evil habits* of mind, disposition, and temper they had when they left the world.” Accordingly, he substitutes “guiltless” for “sinless” in the enlarged statement given in the appendix to his *Inaugural Address* (p. 107). The question, therefore, fails to raise

the question at issue. The question should take the following form :

QUESTION AS IT SHOULD BE ASKED.—“ Is your theory of progressive sanctification such as is consistent with the affirmation that all those who are to be saved enter the middle state cleansed from all pollution of sin, with all evil tendencies and dispositions removed, and in such a sense perfect in holiness as that remainders of sin no longer cling to them? ”

DR. BRIGGS' ANSWER TO THIS QUESTION.—“ Believers who enter the Middle State * * * are still the same persons, with all the gifts and graces and also the evil habits of mind, disposition, and temper they had when they left the world. It is unpsychological to suppose that these will all be changed in the moment of death. It is the Manichean heresy to hold that sin belongs to the physical organization, and is laid aside with the body. * * * The Plymouth Brethren hold that there are two natures in the redeemed, the old man and the new. In accordance with such a theory, the old man might be cast off at death. * * * Sin, as our Savior teaches, has its source in the heart, in the higher and immortal part of man. It is the intent of sanctification to overcome sin in the higher nature. We may justly hold that the evil that still lingers in the higher moral nature of believers will be suppressed and modified with an energy of repentance, humiliation, confession, and determination that will be more powerful than ever before because it will be stimulated by the presence of Christ and His Saints, etc.”—(*Magazine of Christian Literature*, December, 1889, page 114).

This brief catechism we repeat cannot settle all questions. But so far as it goes it seems to bring the truth of Dr. Briggs' teaching before us. These things cannot be explained away. They must be *retracted* or *abided by*.