

A MOMENTOUS STRUGGLE BEGUN.

DEAR BROTHER RUSSELL:--I enclose you herewith another editorial from the New York *Sun* of Dec. 15th, 1892, on the Prof. Smith heresy case. It is of the same purport as the Dr. Briggs case, and points clearly to the inevitable dilemma of the future, either to give up the *Bible* or give up the *creeds*. The Sword of Truth is certainly doing its work effectually now, exactly as you have interpreted the Scriptures. How easily would the acceptance of the truth of the Bible settle all their disputes if they could but see it. Yours, J. C. BELL, JR.

"At last a Presbyterian heretic has been found guilty. He is the Rev. Dr. Smith, a professor in the Lane Theological Seminary of Ohio and a prominent minister of the Presbyterian church.

"The charges against him were substantially the same as those on which Dr. Briggs is now undergoing trial in New York. That is, he has taught that scientific Biblical scholarship proves that there are errors in the Scriptures. [R1489 : page 11] Like Dr. Briggs and many other distinguished and nominally orthodox Biblical critics, he rejects the Mosaic authorship of the first five books of the Bible, upon which, according to the Rev. Dr. Birch, the authority of the Gospel rests, and generally in his teachings he has been in agreement with this modern school of criticism.

"On Monday the Cincinnati Presbytery pronounced such doctrine to be contrary to the doctrine of the Bible itself and of the Westminster Confession, and it condemned Dr. Smith to suspension from the Presbyterian ministry until he renounces and recants his heretical teaching. Of course, he will not purchase his restoration at that price: and he will not be tempted to make the humiliating submission by fear that he will be burned at the stake. Even if the constituted Presbyterian authorities refuse to tolerate his doctrine, he knows that he can get toleration for it elsewhere, and even among Presbyterians themselves. The Cincinnati Presbytery convicted him by a small majority only, though his teaching is opposed to the Westminster Confession in both its spirit and its letter, and is utterly subversive of the Presbyterian faith in the Bible as held for generations past.

"If it is thus made apparent that Dr. Smith has sympathizers with his views even in the conservative Cincinnati Presbytery, how must it be here in New York, where leading Presbyterian ministers and laymen have expressed their agreement with Dr. Briggs so openly? What does his suspension amount to under such circumstances? Because of his condemnation as a heretic by the one party he is all the stronger with the other party. If the Presbyterian Church drives him out as a heretic, he is only the first of a great company of its ministers whom in justice it must condemn to go out with him.

"Dr. Smith will appeal from the Presbytery to the Ohio Synod and thence to the General Assembly, thus keeping alive an issue of tremendous importance to the Presbyterian Church. Unless the sentiment of both of these appellate courts changes radically meantime, there is no probability of his obtaining a reversal of the judgment from either of them. The great majority of the General Assembly has been strongly opposed to such views as his for two years past, and there are no indications that the opposition will be less next spring. It is more likely to become more intense. Even at the risk of dividing the denomination, the Presbyterians must hold their ministry to the teachings of their doctrinal standards, for it is better to split than to go to pieces altogether. If the Bible is not the perfect and absolutely true Word of God received by inspiration from heaven, Presbyterianism has no foundation of divine authority: it rests on human reason.

"That is the issue, and the Presbyterian Church must meet it squarely and decide it positively. It may be confused by subtle theologians like Dr. Briggs and Dr. Smith, even in their own minds, but really it is the

issue between faith and agnosticism. The conviction of Dr. Smith is only the beginning of the most momentous struggle in the whole history of Protestantism."

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At this writing the decision of the New York Presbytery in the case against Dr. Briggs is announced as decided in his favor. Thus has the Presbytery of New York--one of the most influential religious bodies in the world--decided and proclaimed to the world its disbelief in the Bible as the inspired Word of God, and its conviction that the few Bible statements which measure up to Nineteenth century ideas should be treated respectfully *for that reason*, and that the remainder should be regarded as legends and old wives' fables. Truly the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God.--EDITOR.

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