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# BIBLIOTHECA SACRA.

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ARTICLE I.

THE LIMITS OF THEOLOGICAL FREEDOM.<sup>1</sup>

BY PROFESSOR FRANK HUGH FOSTER, PH.D., D.D.

THESE two books, of which the earlier derives a renewed importance from the appearance of the later, present two very serious questions to Congregationalists, to the brief answer of which this article will eventually come. But, first, a review of the most salient features of the question-raising books.

I must interject at this point an apologetic remark. I see, as I have reviewed the article, that it is largely written in the first person. It has thus unconsciously assumed the character of a personal confession. I let it stand so. Perhaps I may thus avoid the suspicion that I am attempting to speak for anybody besides myself.

First, then, to the books. Professor Gilbert's has been so long before the public that a brief review of it with reference to a single feature, will be all that need be intro-

<sup>1</sup>The Revelation of Jesus: a Study of the Primary Sources of Christianity. By George Holley Gilbert, Ph.D., D.D., Professor of New Testament Literature and Interpretation in Chicago Theological Seminary. New York, 1899.

A Critical History of the Evolution of Trinitarianism and its Outcome in the New Christology. By Levi Leonard Paine, Waldo Professor of Ecclesiastical History in Bangor Theological Seminary. Boston, 1900.

duced here. He proposes an entirely objective investigation of the individual teaching of our Lord. He is aware that his results will seem strange to his readers, and he deprecates at the outset all comparison with "traditional beliefs." "A theological test for a historical work is no test at all" (p. viii). The ring of loyalty to Christ is heard in the next following sentence, when he says: "We can get forward in Christian thought only as we become better grounded in the thought of Jesus"; but there is the implication that *as yet* the church knows very little of the true thought of its Master. The damaging effect of such an intimation to the worth of the church, and through that to the teaching efficiency and worth of the Master himself, does not seem to have occurred to our author.

The literary competence of Professor Gilbert is beyond question. He displays intimate familiarity with the leading writers in every department of his subject. The emphasis laid on the historical setting of the teachings of Christ becomes apparent as soon as the book is opened (p. 6 ff.). But an historical fallacy is immediately committed which runs through the whole, the fallacy of neglecting the peculiar elements of *this* history, which either is or is not fundamentally like all other history. It professes on its face to be unlike, for it is introduced by miracle, and teems with the supernatural, and presents an altogether unique personality to our view. But Professor Gilbert, while he does not deny this, makes no affirmation of it, and from the beginning leans very decidedly to the silent assumption that Jesus was a man like all others. Jesus' teaching comes out of his "experience" (p. 14 ff.). At twelve he possessed "a knowledge of the *heart* of revelation," but this was "a boy's knowledge, not a man's," "the knowledge of a boy whose heart was pure, and who walked continually in the clear light of God." When he begins the more specific treatment of Christ's person (p. 167), he

makes this assumption plainer. Jesus "claims and manifests a truly human consciousness." It might be thought that Professor Gilbert, like the "kenotics," was maintaining here merely that Christ entered fully into the lot of man, even by some divine renunciation of attributes or acts (pp. 169, 171, etc.). But ultimately it is plain that this is not his meaning. He is considering Jesus "historically," and the historical eye sees only what the historical observers, the Jews, saw,—a man. Jesus has "the consciousness of *perfect moral union* with the Father" (p. 174), but never is there indication of the consciousness of any other union. "The Synoptic Gospels . . . date the Messianic consciousness of Jesus from the hour of his baptism" (p. 175 ff.). And he finally says, this time commenting on John, that the union of Jesus with the Father "is a union of character, that it is ethical *and not metaphysical*" (p. 199); and that "there is nowhere [in John] a suggestion that the Father is with him, or that he abides in the Father, because he is of the same nature or substance as the Father" (p. 201).

It is a mystery why men should maintain on *historical* grounds, that is, as objective interpreters of the gospel story, that the Messianic consciousness of Jesus began at his baptism. The impression of Matthew is not in favor of it, for the voice from the heavens says<sup>1</sup>: "*This* is my beloved Son" (the parallels reading "Thou art"). The like instance in the same Gospel, viz., that of the heavenly voice heard at the transfiguration (xvii. 5), has the same form, "This is," and adds at the end, "Hear *ye* him," which makes it plain enough that the voice was *for the disciples' sake*. Why not at the baptism? Then it would agree with John i. 33, which declares that the descent of

<sup>1</sup> Professor Gilbert lapses from his usual minute accuracy when he quotes the voice as "*Thou* art," and then cites Matthew iii. 17 with the two other passages, as if it read the same as they (p. 179).

the dove was a sign for *John the Baptist*. I do not, for my part, call it an objective historical rendering of the Gospel narrative thus to neglect the parallel cases and stake everything on a "Thou." But Professor Gilbert does not quite do this. He has also an argument in favor of his interpretation. He says: "His temptation is intelligible only on the view that Jesus believed himself to be the Messiah, and in the wilderness was contemplating the Messianic work. In other words, the Messianic temptation implies that the heavenly announcement 'Thou art my beloved Son' was for Jesus a virtual announcement of Messiahship" (p. 180), the "creative awakening of a new consciousness" (p. 192, substantially). The first of these two sentences is correct; but the second has no argumentative value whatever, unless there be added to it in thought the words "Since he could gain a conception of it in no other way." But what authority has Professor Gilbert for silently assuming this, except the grand fundamental assumption that Jesus was nothing but a man? Could he not have brought the consciousness of Messiahship out of heaven, from which he came?

Professor Gilbert would reply, No! for he does not believe that Jesus came from heaven. The discussion may be here transferred at once, without time-consuming preliminaries, to the Fourth Gospel (p. 193 ff). After remarking that Jesus' union with the Father was unique, and laying just and proper emphasis on the perfection of his *moral* union, Professor Gilbert advances to the assertion, as above quoted, that it was nothing else. Some of his arguments, taken in a restricted application, are good. But what shall be said of this? "Jesus . . . prays that his apostles may be one as he and the Father are one. . . . The union of the disciples which Jesus brought about was purely *ethical* and *religious*. . . . It is impossible, therefore, from the standpoint of Jesus to predicate of his union with the Father

anything which cannot be predicated of the *ideal* union of his disciples" (pp. 200, 201). Has our author never heard of the argument from the greater to the less? Cannot Jesus have meant, As we are in perfect union, first by the internal relations of the divine nature (John i. 1), and then by the consequent perfect correspondence of character (John xiv. 9) and by perfect *moral* union (John x. 30), so they, in their lesser sphere, and in accordance with their powers, are to be in perfect union with the Father and the Son? Of course, Professor Gilbert would urge that we are obliged to bring in matters foreign to this context as shown even by the verses we have ourselves cited. But are they foreign? That is the nub of the question, and to it we shall soon recur.

Similar methods are employed to evacuate the testimony of the Fourth Gospel to every supernatural element of the nature of Christ. He cannot have been literally "sent into the world" because he once said to the disciples "As the Father hath sent me, so send I you." Dr. Gilbert argues: "It is plain that when Jesus speaks of sending his disciples into the world, he does not refer to their coming from some other world into this world. The sending is from his presence, and the world is the field of other labors. *Therefore*, when Jesus speaks of being sent from the Father we are not to suppose that he has in mind a change of worlds, or a change in the form of his existence; but simply the change from the quiet life of a private citizen in Nazareth to the public Messianic career of preaching and establishing the kingdom of heaven." But, again, can he not reason from the greater sending to the less? and *did* he not come from another world himself?

There are a number of other discussions to the same purport which I omit, to come to the most strenuous one, to which the most space as well as the most strength is devoted, the attempt to evacuate John xvii. 5 ("Glorify

thou me with the glory which I had with thee before the world was") of its plain assertion of preëxistence. The argument rests on the following positions: first, that the words *glory* and *glorify* have one and the same meaning in this and related passages; second, that the glory is a reward for present work; third, that it is the glory of doing the Messianic work and being recognized as the Messiah; fourth, that *therefore*, since the glory for which Jesus prays is of such a nature that it must be future, "he cannot have possessed this with the Father before the foundation of the world, except as it was his in the purpose and decree of God" (p. 221). As to which, in brief we say, For the first there is no evidence; against the second is the fact that he distinctly prays for a glory which he had before that work was done, that is before the world was; against the third is the same consideration, and for it nothing; and as to the fourth it is a complete inversion of the true argument, which is, that, since Christ had this glory before the world, it could not be a future reward for his work.

I delay less on the fine distinctions of Professor Gilbert in reference to this last matter, and omit all the rest he has to say, because the true reply is a deeper one. He has based his whole discussion on a fundamental historical fallacy, the fallacy of treating the words of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel as if they were a verbatim report, and might be discussed apart from the ideas of John himself (cf. the remark, p. 210, on the "evangelist's doctrine of the Logos"). This is the fallacy of *false sources*, and is as bad as that of "ambiguous middle" in logic. Nothing is plainer than that the style of the Gospel is one, and that the reports of Jesus' words have derived decided color from the individuality of their reporter. Therefore, his understanding of Jesus' words and those words themselves are for us *one and the same thing*, and to neglect his understanding and try

to force upon Jesus' words another, and an inconsistent, meaning, is to create another Jesus than the one given us, who is therefore simply the product of our own imagination. And this is just what Professor Gilbert has done.

No one can have any doubt of the picture of Jesus which the Fourth Gospel intends to give us. The Word (i. 1), who was the conscious agent of creation (i. 3, 11) and was God, became flesh (i. 14), and this Word, who always speaks in the first person and is the "I" of Jesus, manifested his glory, which was the glory, not of the reward of the Messiah, but of "the only begotten of the Father." This is the one "who *is* in the bosom of the Father" (i. 18), and "came down from heaven," and was "sent" into the world, and out of the divine memories of his true and conscious preëxistence told what he had "seen" and "heard." When critics say the prologue (i. 1-18) is by another hand than the text of the Gospel, they may consistently, though with little real justification, reject its influence upon the interpretation of the remainder of the Gospel. We do not understand Professor Gilbert to indorse this division. But when it stands as a part of the Gospel, it effectually explodes all the distinctive positions of our author which we have above sketched.

Applying, therefore, no dogmatic tests, but only purely historical ones, we judge that our author has repeatedly committed grave blunders of historical method in his book, and that the results which we have above discussed are historically worthless. And, having made this statement, we shall feel at liberty later to say something about them in their dogmatic aspects.

We may then pass on to the second of the two books to be reviewed. But let us say, in passing,<sup>1</sup> that much of

<sup>1</sup> I have been accused in respect to a similar review once written by me of "patronizing" my opponent when attempting to be just to him and to express my sincere appreciation of certain of his marked excellencies.



Professor Gilbert's work is admirable. He has displayed conscientious and careful accuracy throughout. He has nobly emphasized the ethical element of the Gospel. And no one who has, as I have, the privilege of his personal acquaintance, can hesitate to recognize his simple-hearted and earnest love of the truth. But I cannot deem him to have found it, in those matters reviewed, and in a number of others intimately connected with them.

Professor Paine has also undertaken "an unbiased historical and critical study" (p. vi) of his theme, the evolution of trinitarianism. He follows the course of history from the Gospels themselves down through all the great writers to Athanasius, and then through Augustine down to the New England of the Unitarian controversy, and even of to-day. At the close he proceeds to draw out the historical verdict, and to write the program of the theological future. Throughout he is perfectly clear, incisive, epigrammatic, and alert. There is, fortunately, not the least ambiguity about his style, nor the least reserve in announcing his conclusions. We may know exactly what he means, and judge it on its merits by its rendered reasons. He also spares no antagonist,—and, unfortunately, nearly every living author, and most of the dead, must be reckoned in this category. He will therefore be prepared for equally frank and clear criticism.

The first chapter deals with the Greek trinitarianism of Athanasius, and finds the first stages of its development in the Bible (p. 4). There is no trinity in the Old Testament. Neither is there any in the teaching of Jesus, who "was a Jew, trained by Jewish parents in the Old Testa-

**Professor Gilbert will not believe that the only justice he can accept as sincerely meant is complete agreement with himself, nor can I reasonably be suspected of "patronizing" one who holds a position in the denomination and the church at large so much higher than my own. My genuine appreciation of some things and my wonder and dismay at others have gone hand in hand.**

ment scriptures," and whose "teaching was Jewish to the core." "In all Christ's declarations concerning himself, as given in the Synoptic gospels . . . there is no hint anywhere of a pre-incarnate life, or of a supernatural birth, or of a divine incarnation. . . . There is no evidence that the idea of a peculiar metaphysical union with God ever entered his mind" (p. 5).

It will be noted that the Fourth Gospel is here left entirely out of the account; and this is because it "is *undoubtedly* a writing of about the middle of the second century, and the author is entirely unknown" (p. 6). Dr. Paine means by "undoubtedly" only that this is *his* opinion, for even Harnack, who is the great leader of the school of historic criticism to which the professor belongs, has said that the limits of 80 A.D. on the one hand and 110 on the other within which the Gospel must have been composed, and its authorship by an "elder" John who wrote in close dependence on the Apostle John, are "certain historical facts."<sup>1</sup> For Godet, Westcott, and Sanday, who maintain the Johannine authorship, Professor Paine would have but scant respect. Dr. Ezra Abbot may be respected, but he had not "the historical and critical spirit" (p. 356). In spite of them all, Professor Paine comes to a decided opinion that John is neither early nor from John. With this firm conviction of the late origin of the Fourth Gospel and its consequent utter lack of historical value as a source of knowledge of Jesus' teaching, he must, of course, waive it aside.

But how did he get this firm conviction? He leaves us no opportunity for doubt, for he has devoted a special section of his appendix to the "Johannine problem." He has no faith in the testimony of the historical authorities for the authorship of the Gospel by John. In fact, we know next to nothing about John. He was probably slain

<sup>1</sup> *Altchristliche Literatur*, pp. 677, 680, 719.

at a very early date. The subsequent growth of legend about him is not remarkable. "Christianity had its very birth in the air of marvel and miracle" (p. 322); but historical criticism has now remanded the whole fabric, the residence of John at Ephesus, and the story of the raising of the dead man, as well as the perpetual sleep of John in the grave and the bubbling of the dust above him (pp. 322-325) to the realm of fable. Of course, "legend crept into the New Testament narrative," but this is "no more surprising than that it should have filled the opening pages of Livy, or disfigured the gossiping biographies of Suetonius" (p. 326). The task of the critic is to eliminate this element.

We pause to say that here is the same fallacy as was committed by Professor Gilbert, the fallacy of neglecting the peculiar elements of *this* history, or of beginning with the assumption that it is fundamentally the same as all other history. Professor Paine is helped in this view by a curious logical fallacy which he is always committing, the fallacy of merely verbal reasoning. A miracle is a miracle to him, and all miracles are under the same condemnation without reference to their place in the history and their significance for mankind. Miraculous healing by a hair from the tail of Peter the Hermit's ass would be as credible as that by handkerchiefs from the person of the Apostle Paul (Acts xix. 12). There is no miraculous age because no reason at any time for miracle. This is to blur distinctions, and thus to deal with words and not ideas.

But the negative results of "historical criticism" go further. Poor Irenæus comes in for a large share. His text is so corrupt as to be of no real value. We do not know what he actually wrote, and if we did, we should be no better off; for he is a puerile reasoner, defending the four Gospels on the ground that there couldn't be less than

four, as "there are four zones of the earth," etc. (I interject the remark that it seems at least reasonable to suppose, as has often been done, that Irenæus is attempting to reason out an explanation of a fact which primarily rested on totally different ground, on the unbroken and uniform tradition of the church, and that he thus possesses much more importance as a *witness* than as a reasoner.) Then, he was too old, and too liable to failure of memory, to be able to give any valuable testimony as to the distant past,—and, if he had not been, he had at best only a contact at the fourth remove instead of the third, as commonly said, with the Apostle, and thus really knew nothing about him. In short, there is no external historical evidence of the authorship of the Fourth Gospel by John.

We are therefore thrown back on the internal evidence, and this is from the start against the Johannine authorship. In the Synoptic Gospels, the historical sources of knowledge of Jesus [when purged of the legendary element by "historical criticism"], "there is no hint of a superhuman preëxistence, or of a Logos doctrine. But the Fourth Gospel [and note, now, how entirely and delightfully *this* historian disagrees from, and in fact contradicts, Professor Gilbert] at once goes back of Christ's human birth into the eternity of his divine existence, and out of God himself by a divine incarnation makes Christ proceed; and this divine nature of Christ, as the eternal Logos of God, is *the keynote of the whole gospel*" (p. 342). This "radically different Christology" indicates "a long process of evolution," and agrees so fully with Justin Martyr as to indicate "a common chronological stage of evolution" (p. 343).

Then, again, while the Synoptics make repentance the entrance upon the kingdom, in this Gospel we find acceptance of the "dogma of Christ's complete divinity" the *sole* condition of Christian discipleship (p. 343). "The whole point of view is changed." "True religion in the case

of the woman in Luke consisted in works of grateful love; in the case of the restored blind man in John, it consisted in reciting after Christ an article of metaphysical belief" (p. 344). We must pause here to note the fallacy of exaggerated antithesis here committed. The Synoptics have their element of faith in Jesus from the beginning (Matt. viii. 26; ix. 2), and believing *in* Jesus is synonymous with obeying him (John iii. 36); and this was, in the case of the man at Bethesda, to "sin no more" (John v. 14). Professor Paine commits this fallacy repeatedly in the book, for nothing suits him so well as an epigram or an antithesis; and he thus argues again and again about only words, words,—to the confounding of all real reasoning about the things for which they stand. It is perfectly easy to make two writers disagree if you begin by pressing any variation of expression to extremes on either hand which neither would acknowledge, and then declare a contradiction between them. But the only one responsible for the contradiction is the critical manipulator himself.

Still again, the philosophy of the Fourth Gospel is a new one, being essentially tinged with gnosticism! We leave this astonishing statement without comment.

Fourthly, the Synoptic Gospels are plain, their kingdom "essentially of this world" (p. 346), while the Fourth is mystic and transcendental, and lays its emphasis on the heavenly world. "Christ is essentially a heavenly person" [Dr. Gilbert made him essentially a man], "the whole atmosphere of the gospel is unearthly and supernatural," the miracles partaking of this character. "His conversations are all keyed to the same superearthly and heavenly strain." Dr. Paine thus agrees with ordinary Christians in perceiving those characteristics of the Gospel which have made it unspeakably precious and have given it the designation "the heart of Christ"; only, he dislikes them. And he asks: "*Could* such a transcendent, mystical gospel have

been written by one of those Galilean fishermen who, as history tells, were Christ's closest disciples and from whom came to us the primitive synoptic tradition?" (p. 348).

Fifthly, the historical narratives of the Synoptics and the Fourth Gospel are "irreconcilable" (p. 348). But Dr. Gardiner, who founded his harmony on "the order of St. John," said, "It will be found that St. Mark *fully accords with this.*"<sup>1</sup> Dr. Robinson found no such insuperable difficulty, nor does Dr. Riddle, nor any of the harmonists. I venture to say that when all the critical works of the men who follow Dr. Paine are buried in the rubbish-heap of the centuries, such books as "Farrar's Life of Christ," which are founded on the idea of harmony in the four Gospels, and justify their foundation, will be still read with delight by the church of God. Hence, "the motive [of the gospel] is dogmatic, *not* biographical or historical" (p. 349). "A few events are referred to simply to give opportunity for transcendental and mystical discourses [that reminds one, in its setting, of Renan's designation of the same discourses as "*metaphysiques et lourdes.*" I quote from memory.] whose whole strain and character is utterly unlike the familiar, practical, parabolic utterances of the synoptic gospels" (p. 350).

And, finally, Dr. Paine winds up this part of his discussion by a sentence which makes perfectly plain, if it needed anything plainer than the list of mistakes and the illustrations of intellectual blindness which I have adduced, that his criticism is utterly *a priori* and altogether worthless, having its origin in his rooted dislike of the doctrines of the Fourth Gospel. He says: "Were the external evidence for the Johannine authorship of the gospel much less weak than it is, the character of the *internal testimony* furnished by the study of the fourth gospel itself is so overwhelmingly strong against it that it would seem im-

<sup>1</sup> Greek Harmony, p. xxv.

possible to resist the conclusion that is forced upon the mind" (p. 353).

From this review of the discussion of the Fourth Gospel, we may now return to the first chapter of the book. Dr. Paine had begun, when we left it, to trace the development of the "dogma of the trinity." The first stratum is that found in the Synoptics and the Acts. Christ is here "a human Messiah, glorified by a divine mission" (p. 7). The second stratum is found by the legend of the miraculous birth. Attempts to defend this are "worse than vain" (p. 14). The third stratum is in the "intrusion of Greek philosophical thought into the Jewish Palestinian" (p. 17). Paul is influenced by this. He was the true originator of the doctrine of the trinity. He conceived of Christ "as having a certain metaphysical relation to God" (p. 22), and "places him next to God in nature, honor, and power; so that, while remaining a monotheist, he takes a long step towards a monotheistic trinitarianism."

"The faith of the sub-apostolic age remained essentially Pauline" (p. 24), but about the middle of the second century we come to a fourth stratum, the Logos-doctrine, which was of Greek origin, not Jewish (p. 28), and emphasized the divine element in Christ's nature. "Paul starts with the human and proceeds to the divine, the Logos-doctrine reverses the process" (p. 30), the Fourth Gospel, however, remaining Pauline in its Christology (p. 32).<sup>1</sup> Then comes Origen, and finally Athanasius.

The interpretation given to Athanasius deserves more than a passing reference. "The Father, with Athanasius, is the one God, the Supreme and Absolute Being. He never confounds the one God with the Trinity. The three Persons are not one Being. This, to him, is Sabel-

<sup>1</sup> If I followed Dr. Paine's method, I should affirm a "contradiction" between pages 29-31 and this statement, but I prefer to suppose him self-consistent.

lianism. His monotheism is clearly set forth in his 'Statement of Faith': 'We believe in one Unbegotten God, Father Almighty, maker of all things visible and invisible, that hath his being from himself; and in one only-begotten Word, Wisdom, Son, begotten of the Father without beginning and eternally.' Unbegottenness and self-existence are here made the essential attributes of the Father alone. He is the eternal cause and fountain of all being, including even the being of the Son and Holy Spirit. This point is fundamental in the Athanasian system" (pp. 40, 41). The Logos is the real Son of God, and this involves a real generation. This is eternal. The Son is therefore a derived being. The subordination is not official but one of nature. There are consequently three persons, or three distinct beings, of the same generic nature, but *not numerically one*, and these are the trinity. A person and a being are, to Athanasius, the same thing. This he regarded as axiomatic. Professor Paine is especially certain that Athanasius did not teach the *numerical* unity of the Godhead. That he did, is an idea so "ingrained in modern theology" that special attention is given to uprooting it (p. 50 ff.). "*Homoousios*" is distinguished by Athanasius from "*tautoousios*," which means identity of nature. Then, the supposition that "singleness of essence exists with plurality of persons . . . breaks down a fundamental law of logic and psychology. . . . The Greek Fathers were never guilty of such a confusion" (p. 51).

This interpretation of Athanasius is not new, but it may be termed exploded. Were I to argue against it, I should be likely to be charged with getting out of my province, and might be involved in the condemnation which Professor Paine so liberally dispenses to the world at large. I will therefore throw the burden of reply off on Harnack, who cannot be suspected of any partisan bias in favor of



the positions which this article is about to advance, or towards "orthodoxy" of any sort. He says: "This is the key of the entire conception: Son and Father are not a duality, but a *duality in unity*, i. e., the Son has entirely the essence ["*Wesen*," the regular translation of *οὐσία*] which the Father is; he is a unity with the unity which the Father is. Athanasius does not stand for the coördination of both in distinction from a subordination view, but for the *unity and inseparability* in distinction from a view of their *difference and separateness*" (vol. ii. p. 212). "Clearest are the passages in which he ascribes the *ταυτότης* to Father and Son [just what Paine says he does *not* ascribe to them]. Identity of substance is *ταυτότης*." Then follows a series of quotations in which this word or some other form of *ὁ αὐτός* is cited *eight* times! And Harnack even expresses wonder that Athanasius has, as an exception, once done what Paine regards as his *deliberate and characteristic* act, rejected the word *μονοούσιος* for the Son (p. 213). And finally, as if to show how utterly wrong Dr. Paine is as an historian, and, in his view, right as a theologian, Harnack says: "If one asks the question whether Athanasius viewed the deity as a *numerical unity* or as a *numerical duality*, we are to answer, *as numerical unity*. The duality is only a relative one—if one may write the nonsense—: the duality of prototype and image (*Urbild und Abbild*)." Certainly it was not "dogmatic prejudice" that led Harnack to contradict Professor Paine's positions so flatly. But he has left our professor not an historical leg to stand on.

Having got his point of ecclesiastical view established in this interpretation of Athanasius, Dr. Paine now proceeds to follow down the course of history. He sees everywhere declension and direct progress towards the final goal of trinitarianism, which is pantheism. Augustine had a monistic philosophy, and hence sought to explain not how

the three are one, but how the one—the numerical unity being the fundamental truth—is three. Thus he deserts Athanasius, though he did not know it in his ignorance of Greek, and later theologians have also been ignorant of it [including Harnack, Thomasius, Fisher, etc.], and took the first step towards pantheism. He distinguishes “person” from “being,” and thus becomes essentially Sabellian. Such is his legacy to the church, Sabellianism rushing forward, on Niagara-like rapids, towards the abyss of pantheism! “The Augustinian Sabellianism sweeps on resistlessly, carrying in its wake Churchman and Dissenter, Calvinist and Arminian alike, and crosses the Atlantic to find a new home in New England” (p. 102). Edwards had little to say on the trinity. Hopkins, in spite of his holding “eternal generation,” was more Augustinian than Athanasian. His “greater disciple,” Emmons, was an “essential Sabellian.” Then the degeneration of New England trinitarianism began. Stuart substituted the vague word “distinction” for “person”; taught numerical unity; and was so unfortunate as to employ the word “mode,” which at once proves him to Professor Paine to be a “modalist,” and hence a Sabellian, for are not the Sabellians modalists?—I am afraid I shall be thought to be caricaturing my author; but I am not. I would be understood to say deliberately that he commits this logical fallacy, which is, of course, that of “ambiguous middle,” over and over again,—I had nearly said, every time he employs the word Sabellian. He deals with words, and with the superficial aspects of things, and neglects ideas. Such a reasoner cannot keep himself free of the most glaring violations of the laws of thought. They are laws of thought and not rules for performing verbal tricks!<sup>1</sup>—H. B. Smith

<sup>1</sup>Page 112 ff. I note, in partial confirmation of my assertion about the frequency with which this fallacy is committed, the following pages on which gross examples are to be found: 75, 76, 101, 103, 106, 108, 113, 116, 323.

and Shedd go the same path and end in "modalistic, pantheistic Sabellianism" (p. 116). Joseph Cook is still worse. And, finally, here are Phillips Brooks and George A. Gordon, who teach the "consubstantiality" of the human and the divine, and are thus already essentially at the goal, black pantheism! Thither we are all going, and when finally we have reached there, we must reconstruct our theology from the foundations, or there will be no more religion for us.

Professor Paine has his scheme of reconstruction.

And, first, we have to wait a little, for the destructive process is not yet complete. Men like President Hyde, who calls for reconstruction at once, are premature. But when it comes, it will meet three demands: first, the historical, which is for the abandonment of all dogmatic conceptions of the Bible, as to which, and especially the New Testament, the work of destruction is "but half done," although miracle and the Fourth Gospel are already torn away; secondly, the religious,—and religion is an ethical relation to God and Christ and quite independent of all dogmatic ideas; thirdly, the intellectual, by the adoption of a purely inductive method. Some things about it, therefore, are clear. "The new theology is bound to be monotheistic. Dogmatic trinitarianism is either polytheistic or pantheistic in its very nature, and must be classed philosophically in one or the other of these positions, however hard theologians may struggle against it" (p. 277). "With the old theology of the trinity goes also the old christology, both resting on the same speculative foundations. The inductive historical method brings Christ back to us as a true member of the human race, and turns christology into a branch of anthropology. But while he is thus historically a true man, under human conditions, his moral eminence is not thereby at all endangered, nor his unique place among the media of divine revelation lost.

[By the way, that phrase "media of divine revelation" shows that Professor Paine has himself not quite caught up with the march of a "scientific" theology, for, according to that, all revelation is such only by the soul's *immediate* contact with God in its own self-mediated religious discoveries.] Why may not a man have appeared, *in advance of his age and surroundings*, so exceptional in moral development and consciousness as to become and remain a guide and example to his fellow-men in all religious faith and conduct? Such is a true inductive christology" (pp. 281, 282).—*That* an inductive Christology! *That* from an evolutionist! A man *developed* "in advance of his age and surroundings"! "Why not?" asks Professor Paine. Because he *cannot* be in advance of his surroundings, since it is the "surroundings" [environment] that *make* the man. Professor Paine has still too much of the old theology with its "miraculism" clinging to him. When he gets free from it he will recognize that little can be said of Christ and nothing as to the superiority of his *nature*, which cannot be said of Socrates, and will feel no need to call himself a Christian.

I need not dwell on the remaining features of Dr. Paine's scheme. He discusses the atonement only completely to deny the whole thing, as, of course, he must. I have said enough now to get his book fairly before my readers. I have also expressed sufficiently my conception of its worth. I wish to speak respectfully of Dr. Paine, who is so much my senior, but I must speak plainly. I do not charge him with intentional misrepresentation, with conscious sophistry, or with lack of learning; but I must be permitted to say that a greater collection of historical misinterpretations, of logical fallacies, and of philosophical blunders, it was never my ill fortune to be obliged to read,—and I have read Semler and Paulus. Its very epigrammatic brilliancy is its vice. It is a *witty* book,—and wit plays

with *words*; but as to *thought*, it is saturated with fallacy. This I have abundantly and sufficiently indicated.

I close this review of Professor Paine's book by a liberal consecutive quotation, that he may be permitted to state his conclusion in his own way, without the disturbing intrusion of any criticism however just.

"Although the old orthodoxy has long been trembling to its fall, there still remains deeply imbedded in the historical background of our age a body of traditional presuppositions and prepossessions and assumptions that stand squarely in the way of any radical reconstruction; and until this body of misconceptions is utterly removed, it is vain to talk of a new theological movement that will be of any lasting value. The vital trouble with the foundation and framework of orthodoxy is that there is mixed all through it, as a sort of cement, a mass of presuppositions which are opposed to all the critical results of science and of history and to the affirmations of man's moral consciousness. Such for example are the assumptions concerning the supernatural world and its relations to this world;—concerning miracles as suspensions, if not violations, of the ordinary laws of nature;—concerning a supernatural or miraculous revelation of God to man through specially inspired men;—concerning the Bible as a book of divine authorship and hence perfect and infallible in its religious teachings and even in its history and science;—concerning the historicity of the traditional dates and authors of the books of Scripture;—concerning the metaphysical being and character of God, and concerning the account in Genesis of the origin and fall of man. These are a few of the most striking presuppositions of orthodoxy, and it can be seen at a glance that they are utterly inconsistent with all the discoveries of science and all the latest results of historical scholarship. But it will be asked: Are they not already discarded by all intelligent evangelical Christians? By no means. Take any latest theological book, even of the most liberal evangelical sort, and one will find one or more at least of these traditional presuppositions, half concealed, perhaps, but still assumed throughout. There is but one way of eliminating such assumptions, viz., by a radically new method of procedure.

"The first question, then, in considering how a new theology shall be formed is one of *method*. Propædeutics or methodology is the first necessary stage in a new theological movement. Methodology has to do with *the way* in which matters of religious truth are approached and examined. The materials of theology are not here in question. As I have already suggested, much material of the old theology will enter into the new. Let me not be misunderstood on this point. It is not the *material* of the old theology, but the *way* in which that material is handled, the method of systemization employed, and the unscientific and unhistorical

mixture of true and false materials, that render it useless for the new theological builder. What has continued the old theology so long in existence is the fact that it has preserved and defended so many of the vital truths of religion. Such are the truths of man's free moral nature and responsibility, of sin and sinfulness and its moral effects, of man's capacity for repentance and a new spiritual life, of the religious sense of God and of his moral supremacy, of man's instinctive hope of immortality, of conscience that commands to duty and stirs the conviction of moral reward and punishment, and of the revelations of God's goodness and love in nature and providence, and especially in the gospel of Christ. But while such truths have been held, theological presuppositions and assumptions have been put behind them that have entirely changed their character in a theological system, so that they have become repugnant to the moral consciousness and reason, as well as inconsistent with sound historical and philosophical criteria. It is not these great and essential religious truths themselves, but the way in which they have been shaped and distorted in a system, and mixed with all sorts of errors, mythological, legendary, Jewish, pagan, that makes the old orthodoxy, as a system of truth, a thing to be rejected and cast away" (pp. 249-251).

The "assumptions" of the first paragraph show what Professor Paine would reject; the "vital truths" of the second what he has left.

To this point I have said nothing about the relations of these books to the theological standards. I have complied with Professor Gilbert's demand, and have tested them historically and logically. I have condemned them, and that with the more uncompromising vigor, *because* I was speaking historically and not dogmatically. But now I propose to ask the question, Do these books conform to our standards, and are they within the limits of our theological freedom? And then I propose to discuss, since the question may not be regarded as settled among us, whether there are, or should be, any limits of theological freedom for professors and ministers for all of us, and what such limits are. I say nothing about seminary creeds, or the relations of professors to such creeds. The question is a general, denominational one; and that is the same as to say that it is to be settled on the basis of general considerations and universal reason.

The preliminary question as to these books may be dismissed very speedily. Neither of them agrees at all on the most vital points with any creedal statement which Congregationalists have put forth themselves, or indorsed when put forth by others. Professor Paine's "new theology," to the support of which the whole course of his book tends, is bald naturalism. There is in it no divine Redeemer, no supernatural rescue of lost men—the heart of evangelical theology. As to the person of Christ and his atoning work, Professor Gilbert is equally divergent from all our standards. He may hold, as he is reported to have said he does, a metaphysical doctrine of the trinity; but he affirms that Christ taught nothing as to his own preëxistence. If Christ did not teach it, he did not know anything about it; and if *he* did not know anything about it, no one did, and it is not true. That process of thought is conclusive. I have so much confidence in Professor Gilbert that I doubt not he has followed it, and so has not said what has been imputed to him about the "metaphysical" trinity. There is no metaphysical trinity. Either it is a biblical trinity, or it is nothing!

Two of our theological professors have thus abandoned our evangelical theology. Do the limits of academical freedom extend far enough to include them still?

Now, on the one hand, we are, and ought to be, jealous for a true liberty of thought in the professorial chair. We wish to learn, and we can learn only by an unhampered investigation, not committed to any foregone result. Congregationalists are therefore determined to raise no petty issues. They are willing that their professors should fall into errors, if these are not vital, and will never tolerate the disposition to nag at men for minute variations from generally accepted views. They seem inclined in these days to give considerable play to such deviations. They seem ready to put up with the teaching of views which

they really regard as pernicious, willing to push liberty to a large extension, rather than to appear to extinguish it.

But the church has a practical aim. She is in the world to save men by the preaching of the cross. She has fundamental conceptions as to the ruin of men and the divine method of salvation. She cannot perform her mission unless she hold fast to these conceptions, and hence she must demand that they be held by her ministers and taught in her seminaries. The proposers of new views will, of course, question this position. They will say that the new views are capable of eliciting greater zeal and interest, and of promoting larger and higher work. Theorists always make such claims and always must, for it is the very reason why new theories are propounded that they are believed to be truer and better. But the church has a practical aim, and partakes therefore of the character of every practical institution. She knows that her great doctrines have saving power, for they have proved to be the very hiding-place of God's presence. And she cannot venture to abandon them for views subversive of them, because such views would probably subvert also the work of saving men.

Nor is this merely the resistance to change characteristic of all practical conservatism. There are substantial reasons for doubting the new theories. They are not really new, and their history is against them. They have new forms; but their essence, the denial of the supernatural element in Christianity, is as old as the outbreak of Rationalism in Germany in the middle of the eighteenth century, or of English Deism in the latter half of the seventeenth, or of Socinianism in the sixteenth. None of these forms of theology, different as they seemed to be in their expressions, and different in their origin, methods, tone, and formulation, but identical as they were at bottom, manifested any power of aggressive evangelical activity, or even of survival as phases of Christian life. Where are they to-day?



And with what feelings are they regarded by the living, throbbing heart of an eager advancing church? No new theologian is willing, for an instant, to accept their characteristic names as his own designation. Nor has New England Unitarianism succeeded in commending itself any better to modern evangelicals. Whatever their essential agreement with the denials or affirmations of those bodies may be, the radical element in our denomination are careful to disclaim explicitly either Unitarianism or Universalism.

The present tendencies displayed by the new liberalism are almost equally against it in the eyes of thoughtful lovers of the historical gospel of Christ. It is said that the emphasis is changing in our day, so that "the salvation of the world as a whole" is giving place to the salvation of individuals as the ideal of Christian activity, and that this is a return to the doctrine which Jesus presented in his preaching of the "kingdom." If that is all that is happening, the lovers of evangelical truth need only rejoice. The activities of the church need to be made as inclusive as possible,—and, strange though it may sound to some ears, there is nothing in the professed features of the new movement in the way of essential aim or even method (except possibly the building of a gymnasium under the same roof as the church!) that is particularly new. Some of the most successful "institutional" churches are thoroughly conservative. But there seems to be more of real divergence from evangelical ideals in the social methods of our day, when managed by the liberals, than is consistent with the explanation of a mere change in emphasis. The prevalent hostility to revivals among them is a sign of bad omen. Do they disbelieve in conversion? Are they opposing not merely shallow and hysterical evangelism, as would their conservative brethren also, but all evangelism, and all solemn putting of the question to the individ-

ual soul, Do *you* love Jesus Christ? Are they forgetting the individual in seeking to save the mass? And is the solemnity of individual sin and of individual condemnation by a holy God being lost sight of when men are addressed as masses, and when the methods of the pulpit are exchanged for those of the platform, and those of the church for those of places of entertainment, in the hope of gaining them? Current methods sometimes raise these questions irresistibly. Those who still believe in the old gospel are led to distrust the new by these and like things, and they feel the importance of maintaining the controlling elements of the old ideals in the midst of all the changes of the present, that they may preserve the old power, and the old work. Let the doctrines of the New Testament go, take away the divine Redeemer, the infinite atonement of the propitiatory sacrifice, and, they fear, the saving activities of the church will also be found to have gone. The limits of liberty must be drawn inside of the area of chilling, destructive negations of vital truth.

Professor Paine suggests, and many are now favoring, another basis of church fellowship than the dogmatic. The basis of the suggestion is well expressed when Professor Paine says that "the vital question of religion is not what a man believes, how much or how little, but what the disposition of his heart and will is toward those objects of faith that lie within the range of his own moral consciousness" (p. 204). With that sentence I entirely agree. The fundamental element of the Christian experience is the supreme choice of apprehended duty as the law of life. But when Professor Paine, though declaring that "clear apprehensions of truth are of great religious value" (p. 205), goes on to say that it "is not essential that ministers should have any definite philosophy [of Christian truths] at all," and that "the chances are that a young minister's philosophy would be a very poor one, and a poor one is worse

than none at all," he departs far from truth and reason. In the name of our youth, I protest against this belittling of their power of thought. They *are* competent to arrive at a Christian philosophy, as witness thousands that have. I do not believe that the prime of manhood has any advantage over the mature youth in matters of thought, except in the greater power to *weigh premises*, in that, namely, which experience of life can give. In abstract thought, and in many matters of theology, that advantage is slight. I do not know anything more mischievous in the tendencies of the present day than this cheap belittling of that period of life which has, in fact, produced many of our greatest works of invention and thought, and carried forward most of our greatest practical enterprises. Professor Paine must have had a strange experience with young men in his years of teaching to be able to say what he has.

But, this lesser point aside, Professor Paine would evidently favor an expression which I recently heard, that if a candidate seemed to have the *spirit* of Christ, he should be ordained, even though he denied, or failed to apprehend, so important doctrines as the divinity of Christ. Professor Paine, of course, goes much further than this. But it will always be a question how the possession of the spirit of Christ is to be determined. It is easy to profess the spirit of Christ. It is easy also to display that native amiability and geniality (if one is so fortunate as to possess it) which many a pagan Greek and Roman had, and which in some of its manifestations is strikingly like the gentleness that comes from deep sympathy with Jesus. But docility towards the truth of Christ is a part of his spirit; and no better proof can be given of *some* participation in that spirit than acceptance of the truth. Now, if our churches do not know what the truth of Christ is, they may be careful about applying such a test; but they are

not so ignorant, or so fearful of being in error, as to succumb to this paralysis of action. They believe in the truth enough to commend it to the heathen as their one salvation. They believe in it enough to embody it in their church creeds. And they believe in it enough to say that, if any candidate for the ministry does not know whether Christ preëxisted or not, he is not fit for the holy service. They ought to say this in every case unmistakably.

It may be objected that all such limits are peculiar to theology, and that thought ought to be as free there as anywhere. But the objection rests upon error. The setting of limits to beliefs is not peculiar to theology. It prevails in physics, chemistry, politics, sociology. A chemist who should deny the atomic theory and the law of definite proportions and begin to teach the theory of phlogiston, would find that he had transgressed "limits" indeed! What physicist could maintain his place who should deny the undulatory theory of light, and the impenetrability of matter? And what show would a physician have in a medical association who should go over to "Christian science"? There is an "orthodoxy" in every practical pursuit, and must be. It is not only not peculiar to theology, but it is managed there with a degree of leniency and consideration unknown in the sterner circles of physical science. A Christian church has the same right to its principles, to the maintenance of order and quiet in the performance of its work, and to the safeguarding of its future, that a body of physicians or a college of science has. It need ask for nothing more. It certainly can ask for nothing less.

Another objection, quite commonly insisted on, is that if *any* limits whatever are drawn, men who may be put thereby in jeopardy of their positions will either refuse to prosecute investigations or conceal their results when

gained, thus becoming either cowardly fossils or liars. I do not know that the objection is ordinarily put so bluntly, but that is its meaning! No doubt this would be the result in certain cases, for human nature is weak. Every good thing has its bad side. If any safeguards are put up, some evasion of them will be practiced. But it may be emphatically denied that there is any *special* danger in this direction. I think I know theological professors pretty well, and I think they generally have the courage of their opinions. Instead of being less courageous than other ministers or than laymen, they are probably more so, because of the abstract nature of their pursuits, and their exemption from the daily necessity of measuring their words. They will investigate, because this is their official duty; and they will fearlessly declare their results, because they believe them, and hope to commend them to others. And they will be willing to abide by the result.

For,—and this leads to the next objection,—brave and good men do not expect to carry precious truth without strenuous effort, and they are willing to pay the price for conferring what they believe to be benefits on mankind. The objection is that it is not right to make men suffer in purse or reputation for their honest convictions. True, it is not right to make men suffer when we *know* they are correct; but it is duty to resist evil and error, and until a man can convince his fellow-workers that his new proposal is truth instead of error, he must be content that it should be treated as error. If he is not content, he does not love the truth himself! If he cannot understand why men oppose what seems to them false teaching, he does not understand their love of what they hold to be vital and saving truth; and if he does not understand this, it is because he does not sympathize with it, or share it. Any man who, by his loyalty to what he himself believes to be the gospel, has the first and most

elementary qualification for the professorate or the ministry, will understand what truth costs in this world, and will be willing, yes, *glad* (Acts v. 41), to suffer, if necessary, to introduce it to the church. We shall have, no doubt, fewer rash and immature innovators and fewer theological sensationalists, but we shall have no fewer contributors to sound learning and genuine progress.

A more serious objection to this line of thought is that it is an invitation to schism; and it might lead to a repetition of the "mistake" of our fathers in the Unitarian controversy (1815 and following years), when the orthodox churches renounced fellowship with the Unitarian, and divided the denomination. I grant that the course suggested might lead to a schism, provided our churches are so far advanced on the path of a destructive theological criticism that any considerable number would prefer to leave us rather than maintain the reality of the supernatural, the trinity, the incarnation of the Son, the atonement, and regeneration by the Holy Spirit,—for these are the doctrines proposed for our rejection by the books before us. I do not believe that we should lose any churches on such an issue. But if we did, the question might fairly be put, whether they were not already lost to any constructive work with us for the kingdom of Christ. It is no "mistake" when churches which really *have* no fellowship, announce this fact and proceed to recognize it in their public ecclesiastical acts. A denomination may be really divided, while it pretends to be united. Orthodoxy gained a powerful impulse in Massachusetts when Amherst College, and Andover Seminary, and the new orthodox churches of Boston, and the American Board were founded. Had the orthodox remained in professed fellowship with Unitarians, it is very much to be doubted whether there would have been religious zeal sufficient to found, or maintain when founded, these famous and useful institu-

tions. And it may also be doubted whether there would to-day be any Congregationalism at all in America, had not the First Churches in Cambridge and many another Massachusetts town abandoned meeting-house and funds, and "gone out" for Christ's sake to begin again the work of church-building at the bottom.

And yet a schism is a great evil. Congregationalism in England and America suffers to-day untold evils because it left the Church of England; and Unitarianism lost unspeakably when it forfeited the corrective influences of the evangelical piety and doctrine of the churches which held by historical Christianity. Schism in Congregationalism to-day, if it reached very large proportions, would mean the paralysis of our missionary work at home and abroad, the serious crippling of our educational institutions, the certain decay of the excised churches,—and it would carry dismay and confusion into every other Christian communion in the country. Men would wonder if it is worth while to attempt to build anything permanent or great in church organization, if after such a lesson as Congregationalism received at the beginning of the nineteenth century, and after her unparalleled triumphs during its progress, at the beginning of the twentieth she did not possess coherency enough to maintain her ecclesiastical fellowship. The young, already widely alienated from the church, would be more alienated, and the tide of irreligion in the country would rise higher than it has. And yet, all this is preferable to slow death. Life is so precious that it is to be purchased at *any* necessary sacrifice. The evils, great as they would be, would be less than those felt if the voice of Congregationalism should be given against the atonement, against the incarnation, against the supernatural,—in a word, against salvation by Jesus Christ, the crucified but living and divine Redeemer. That would *terminate* our work, not merely cripple it. That would *close* missions,

*merge* Christian colleges in state institutions, become ten-fold more indifferent and irreligious than they now are, *kill* churches, discourage Christian brethren of other communions, and introduce in our own body an era of religious desolation such as the world has not yet seen. And if the doctrines of the books under review become prevalent among us, that, sooner or later, will be our history.

My plea is, then, for the more thorough and consistent application among us of reasonable theological tests. We have never ceased to apply them, nor have we been careless at any time. But we have been generous, too generous as it would now seem, for safety and the security of our work. The books before us are more than solitary phenomena. They are indicative of a real and impending danger. They indicate a rising feeling which is shared by a considerable number, that the very foundations and elementary truths of historical Christianity are questionable. They point to the increase of a party which will deny all our fundamental historical principles, and convert our gospel into a "different gospel," and plunge us into theological and practical chaos. We have undoubtedly fellowshiped some who are not "of" us. The time has come for the lines to be more rigidly drawn. I do not plead for the shibboleths of any theological school, I plead only for the central and determinative doctrines of the evangelical system. Men who deny these or are ignorant about them should be informed that their true fellowship is elsewhere. They ought to draw the distinction themselves. Professor Herron in resigning from Iowa College (for reasons, however, not of a theological nature) set a noble example which others might follow, very much to their credit. It is not creditable for a man who has in fact abandoned every distinctive element of Christianity to call himself a Christian and claim fellowship with Congregationalists who stand



firmly by the Christianity of the Gospels, which is the only Christianity that has any right to the name. He ought to be strongly enough attached to his real principles to wish to propagate them without disguise and without the constant hindrance which the system of a denomination, founded on other principles and organized to promote them, throws about him. Believing with Huxley and other such men, he should imitate their frank and honest renunciation of a church they did not believe in. But if such a man will not voluntarily take his true place, it is the right and the imperative duty of Congregationalism, as it values its own existence, to show him his place in unmistakable terms.

In a word, it is time for evangelical men among Congregationalists to vote on ordinations, installations, call of professors, etc., according to their theological convictions. I know that this is often a matter of great difficulty. Often charity and love of peace lead a man to hope that things are better than they seem. A church is often said to be so eager to have some doubtful man settled over it, that it will "produce confusion," "give the church a staggering blow," "cripple the work," or what not, if he is not installed *instantly*. But, after all, the churches want help when they call councils; and councils have duties to God and Christ and his truth. Men ought to vote according to many things, but *now* the faith of the candidate is a very important element of the matter. Those customary pleas are often very far from the mark. I have sat more than once on councils when a majority voted for the installation of an unqualified man "because the church demanded it," when I learned afterwards that the wisest and most influential men in the church did *not* wish it. I was told in this study where I write, but a day or two since, in reference to a council long ago, by a member of the church in question, that he, "had he been a member of

the council, *should have voted against installation!*" And yet he was thought to be *very earnest* for it. Such pleas are all elements of confusion. Councils should have convictions, and they should express them. That is what they are for! And thus they will save the Church.

And, now, in closing, I put and answer briefly those two questions which I said in the beginning these books presented to us:—Is Congregationalism threatened by the inroads of anti-Christian naturalism? My answer is, Yes! Can anything be done to stay its advance? Yes! Let Congregationalists on all appropriate occasions *vote according to their theological convictions!* Nothing more is needed than simply that.