

**THE ANDOVER HERESY. IN THE MATTER  
OF THE COMPLAINT AGAINST EGBERT  
C. SMYTH AND OTHERS, PROFESSORS  
OF THE THEOLOGICAL INSTITUTION IN  
PHILLIPS ACADEMY, ANDOVER**

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The Andover Heresy. In the Matter of the Complaint Against Egbert C. Smyth and Others,  
Professors of the Theological Institution in Phillips Academy, Andover by Various

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**VARIOUS**

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# THE ANDOVER HERESY.

1887

IN THE MATTER OF THE COMPLAINT AGAINST EGBERT  
C. SMYTH AND OTHERS, PROFESSORS OF THE  
THEOLOGICAL INSTITUTION IN PHILLIPS  
ACADEMY, ANDOVER.

PROFESSOR SMYTH'S ARGUMENT,

*TOGETHER WITH*

THE STATEMENTS OF PROFESSORS TUCKER,  
HARRIS, HINCKS, AND CHURCHILL.

*right Coffin Smyth*

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1887.

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BOSTON.

IN THE MATTER OF THE COMPLAINT AGAINST  
EGBERT C. SMYTH AND OTHERS,

*Professors of the Theological Institution in Phillips Academy  
in Andover.*

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*May it please your Reverend and Honorable Body :*

By the Statutes of the Associate Foundation it is made your duty "to take care that the duties of every Professor on this Foundation be intelligibly and faithfully discharged, and to admonish or remove him, either for misbehavior, heterodoxy, incapacity, or neglect of the duties of his office." By the Statutes of the Brown Professorship, which I have the honor to hold, this Foundation is made "subject to visitation" in the same manner with the Associate Foundation. In the libel filed by the complainants and which defines the present issue I am not charged with misbehavior, incapacity, or neglect of official duty. The sole issue is one of "heterodoxy."

I desire to call your attention to the fact that I am not charged with "neglect of the duties of my [his] office." It is certainly possible that a Professor, enamored of some new opinion neither out of "harmony with" nor "antagonistic to" the Creed of the Seminary, might spend so much time in maintaining and inculcating it as to neglect his duty in respect to other truths. If this were the accusation in the present case I am confident that I should have no difficulty in meeting it. But wide as is the range of the present libel it nowhere ventures upon such an aspersion. I stand before

you, even in these calumnious days, absolutely without reproach from any quarter in this particular.

I am charged before you with "heterodoxy" — nothing more, nothing less, nothing other. If I am guilty of "heterodoxy" you can remove or admonish me as the issue of this trial, according to your judgment and discretion. If I am not guilty I am entitled to a clear acquittal.

It has been said that this is not a trial for heresy, but for a breach of trust. A suit for a breach of trust would lie more properly against the Trustees or Treasurer of the Seminary. Not a cent of the Seminary Funds comes into my hands save as I receive it from said Treasurer, who acts by order of the Trustees. If there has been a breach of trust in the management of the funds the custodians and disbursers of those funds are guilty of this offence, and there are available and natural methods of prosecution. The arraignment of five professors, and the interruption of their work in the midst of a term of study, is not one of these natural methods. This is a trial for heresy, or it is nothing. The violation of solemn promises which is charged is simply an issue of interpretation of a creed. The only charge in essence and in form is the accusation of "heterodoxy."

It may indeed be suggested in qualification of what I have said, that "heterodoxy" in the present instance is to be determined by an unusual, particular and remote standard, and that this criterion is not the test which would now be imposed, so that I might be orthodox according to the rule which would be applied to-day, and yet heterodox according to the rule prescribed in the Seminary Creed. I do not admit that such a distinction is applicable in the present case. I am advised by eminent legal authority that the word "heterodoxy" in the Statutes cannot be thus limited and defined. But irrespective of this objection I must say that I think better of our Creed, better of the Founders of the Seminary, than such a contention would admit. The Creed bears traces, doubtless, of controversies which no longer interest the public, and unadjusted and even irreconcilable conceptions linger in some of its phrases. But to whatever criti-



cisms it is fairly exposed, I "hold, maintain, and inculcate," Mr. President, that it does not bind the Seminary to an antiquated phase of belief, or to the "warts and wens" which a living theology knows how to get rid of, but on the contrary, that it logically leads to those adjustments of orthodox thought and belief which are now necessary, and in general leaves an open path for such as the future may require. Such a statement doubtless will strike with surprise some who are the friends of doctrinal progress. There is abroad an opinion which is founded, I am persuaded, upon *a priori* reasoning, and not upon scientific examination. It is like certain theories of inspiration which are derived from what men think the Bible ought to be and not from what it is. It reasons thus: The human mind has made doctrinal progress since the century opened. A creed written eighty years ago must be antiquated. That depends. An *a priori* "must be," science has taught us, is not always an "is so." It depends on who says it, still more on what has been said. I am not a eulogizer of the Andover Creed. Clothed in phraseology which it requires much special learning accurately to interpret, composed as a compromise, designed to admit under it a great variety of philosophical theories and beliefs, expressive at certain points by its silences even more than by its utterances, balancing traditional statements by novelties of doctrine, inserting some words to bar against regression and others which make progress necessary, confessing the authority of Scripture but not failing to emphasize the constant revelation in creation, providence and redemption, it cannot be rightly understood without a more careful study than its critics have usually given to it, and whatever else it may be I am persuaded that it is not the symbol of an antiquated phase of orthodoxy, nor the chain and ball of an imprisoned theology. I appear before you of necessity to make personal answer to charges most of which are utterly false, charges some of which, if true, would justly expose me to the accusation of heresy under the standards of a catholic orthodoxy, but I have a larger contention and a deeper interest. I desire to secure by your decision for those who may come after

me the rights of a reverent scholarship in the study of God's word; the liberties of thought and life which are necessary to fruitful biblical study; the opportunity for that spontaneity and freedom in the discovery and acquisition of sacred truth, without which the articles of any creed however excellent can never become the reality of present, personal convictions and the living springs of knowledge, but must always remain the dry and barren deposit of a dead past. I believe the result at which I aim expresses the only correct interpretation of the duties and rights of a Professor in Andover Seminary, as these obligations and liberties are defined and guaranteed in the Creed and Statutes of the Founders.

Before, however, I venture out upon this larger field of thought, I desire to meet the complainants upon the narrowest line which they may select. I shall attempt to show that, even when every indication from the Founders is disregarded which points to that nobler conception of the function of the Creed at which I have just hinted, the present complaint is still futile and void.

In order to convict me under the present libel the complainants must prove that I hold beliefs which are inconsistent with a valid acceptance of the Creed, or that I have violated my solemn promise "that I will maintain and inculcate the Christian faith as expressed in the Creed . . . so far as may appertain to my office, according to the best light God shall give me, and in opposition to" various heresies and errors specified and unspecified, ancient and modern.

The first requirement pertains to belief, the second to official conduct in matters of faith.

To establish my guilt under the first requirement the complainants must prove at least two things: that I hold an alleged belief, and that this belief is contrary to the Creed. As I have intimated it will be contended in my behalf that there is still a further condition of the validity of the accusation, viz., that this particular belief be shown to be heterodox by a yet higher and more continuous and potent standard of orthodoxy. Without waiving this point I shall not press it

in what I here present. I am content to insist at the present stage of the argument upon the two conditions first named, the necessity of proving that I hold what is charged, and that such a belief contravenes the Creed.

To prove my guilt under the second requirement, — that of official conduct, — still more must be established than under the first. My official promise must be considered in all its parts, and as a whole. No one can rob me of the conviction that whatever have been my deficiencies I have endeavored to maintain and inculcate so far as pertains to my office "the fundamental and distinguishing doctrines of the gospel" as expressed in the Creed, "according to the best light God" has given me, and in opposition to the various errors by which history shows that these truths have been confronted. I have preferred, however, to try and show what neglected element of truth heresy may be thriving upon, and how it may be healed by a larger truth, rather than merely to antagonize it. I submit to your careful consideration this test of the validity of any proof, advanced by the complainants, of my "heterodoxy" as a teacher. It is a three-fold cord. Each strand is necessary. It is weak as a broken thread if either fails. It must be shown that I have "maintained and inculcated," that is, taught purposely and urgently, what is charged; that I have done this in my work as a Professor in the Seminary; and that this deed is a violation of my promise to teach the Christian faith as expressed in the Creed "according to the best light God shall give me." I ask you in simple justice rigidly to apply this test to what on this point the complainants may offer as proof.

You will pardon me also if I request you to bear in mind that I am not on trial before you as an editor of the *Andover Review*, or as a joint author of a volume called *Progressive Orthodoxy* published by Messrs. Houghton, Mifflin & Co., 4 Park Street, Boston. I would not draw any fine or artificial distinction between my utterances in the *Review* and in the Lecture Room. No honest man, certainly no trustworthy religious teacher, can hold a double and mutually contradictory set of opinions, one for his pupils, another for his