

## ARTICLE VIII.

THE AMERICAN BOARD AND RECENT  
DISCUSSIONS.

THERE are some indications that the controversy which for some years past has agitated the constituency of the American Board is about to pass into a new phase or to be merged into a wider movement of thought. The time is, therefore, opportune for a brief review of the merits of this controversy and a careful statement of the results, so far as they have yet been realized. Such a study is of more than temporary interest and value, since the matters in debate have touched the effective working of one of the most venerable and successful missionary organizations of the times, and have also been closely related to one of the great theological movements of this generation. It is these wider bearings of the questions in review which have attracted the general interest of Protestant Christendom; something more has been seen to be at stake than the fortunes of a few missionary candidates or of the officials in a missionary society, something which affects radically the whole missionary enterprise of the age and the general interpretation of the gospel and the Christian faith. Whatever part purely personal considerations or

interests of vast populations as well as the forms and power of civilized life over the greater portion of the habitable globe, are under inquiry and are subjected to the severest tests. The meaning and the validity of the divine message which the Master has commissioned us to proclaim, the warp and woof of the Christian faith by which we live and which is the one supreme treasure of human hearts in all generations,—it is these transcendent themes which are in debate, it is these ineffable interests which have been cast into the balances of thought and discussion.

Let us take a brief survey of the salient features of the movement, that the facts may be familiar and that the grounds and significance of the criticisms we offer may be plainly in mind. Before we begin, it may be needful to say that the general doctrinal ferment of these later years is not specifically in view. We recognize it, we notice its connection with the events we are to study at more or fewer points, we are not insensible to the logical relations which subsist between these two movements; but for obvious and sufficient reasons we confine our present study to the agitations which have been directly connected with the American Board and its administration during the past four years. The much-censured speeches on the platform of the Board at Portland in October, 1882, the excitement connected with the election of Dr. Newman Smyth to the chair of theology in Andover Theological Seminary, and the commotion involved in the settlement of Rev. George A. Gordon over the Old South Church of Boston, are often referred to as parts of that course of events which we purpose to examine; but for obvious reasons they must all be left out of view. Up to the early months of 1886 the constituency of the Board, so far as the internal history of the Society is concerned, had continued united and harmonious in approval of what the Board or its Committee and Officers had done; the

annual meetings of the Board had been marked by the warmth of missionary zeal, the unbroken strength of brotherly love and confidence, the high spiritual sentiments, that prevailed; the course of events at the missionary rooms, full of deep import and bearing on the greatest interests, had attracted no special attention from the outside public because of any differences of opinion, much less because of any antagonistic policies, that prevailed or were thought to prevail there.

Early in 1886 a new experience came to the missionary rooms. Three or four applicants for appointment appeared before the officers of the Board with statements of Christian belief that differed in certain unusual respects from "the doctrines commonly held by the churches sustaining the missions under the care of the Board." These differences were not the same in every case; they all grew out of the temporary atmosphere and drift of theological thought, and were especially connected with the doctrine of the Scriptures, the doctrine of the atonement, and certain points in eschatology. The young men who presented these divergencies of thought and speculation were frank in their expression, and generally very ready to explain and support their views; and there was neither ambiguity, nor the desire to be ambiguous, in the presentation they made. Neither the officers of the Board nor the Secretaries were permitted to labor under any mistake or misapprehension respecting this new hue which their theological system as a whole, and particular parts thereof, presented.

Under the conditions which had prevailed in the

missions under the care of the Board." According to all precedents in the history of the Board, therefore, they were to this extent and for this reason disqualified for the service they desired ; and the Committee, in the absence of explicit instructions to the contrary, had no option but to declare it inexpedient to proceed to their appointment.

The three or four applications involving the question of doctrinal qualifications which came to the Committee before the annual meeting at Des Moines, in October, 1886, were decided by the Prudential Committee according to their best judgment of what the recognized aim of the Board, and the precedents in its past history, and the present convictions of the corporate members, required. This action and the grounds of it were subjects of earnest and prolonged debate at Des Moines,<sup>1</sup> the ablest advocates of the new departure in theology and missionary appointments speaking at length, and a definite decision was rendered. The Board by its deliberate and decisive action cordially approved what the Committee had done in this matter, and instructed the Committee in its future missionary appointments to exercise the same caution in guarding the Board from any committal to the doctrine of future probation. This action was clear and unmistakable, and was generally accepted as final. The events of the following year, however, served to give it a further definition and to set it in clearer light. A young man explicitly avowing his acceptance of the hypothesis of a future probation, and deriving it both from the testimony of Scripture and the evidence of reason, and presenting deviations from the common evangelical faith at other points, applied to the Committee for appointment, and the Committee declined to proceed, alleging as the reason, that it felt itself restrained by the explicit instructions of the Board in its action on this subject at Des Moines. A little later this same young man united with

<sup>1</sup> Seventy-sixth Annual Report of the Board, pp. viii-x, 13-16.

one of those whose application the previous year had been declined, in presenting a joint re-application for appointment, with a new statement of their Christian faith which omitted all distinct reference to the disputed points. As soon as it was ascertained by further correspondence that their views in regard to future probation and connected points remained unchanged, the Prudential Committee renewedly declared themselves bound by the instructions of the Board at Des Moines, and voted that it was inexpedient to appoint these young men so long as they held these views. A young woman who applied for appointment, and who seemed at first to entertain these novel opinions, upon more careful inquiry was found ready to state that in her opinion the Bible gives no intimation that there will be a state of future probation, and that the doctrine of Universalism is no part of the gospel; and accordingly she was appointed. A young man who applied, and about whose statements there arose some question, when explicitly interrogated, refused either to affirm or to deny the hypothesis of a future probation; and, in view both of the inadequacy and unsatisfactory character of his statements and of other features of the case, the Committee agreed that it was inexpedient to appoint him at present. Closely connected with these cases, both in public discussion and in the nature of the questions involved, was the case of a missionary temporarily in this country, who in an unguarded moment had publicly avowed his sympathy with the opinions which were disturbing the counsels of the Board, and had thus caused embarrassment in the missionary rooms and in the mission to which he belonged. After careful inquiry and deliberation the Committee authorized the return of this missionary to his field abroad, upon the understanding, explicitly stated in the vote assenting to his return, that he was not committed to the theory of a future probation and that, in accordance with the

expressed wish of his associates in the mission, he would carefully refrain from preaching or teaching any speculation in favor of the theory of a future probation.

The Annual Meeting of the Board at Springfield followed an active discussion of the whole subject of missionary qualifications in the public press. These cases and all the documents connected with them were fully reported to the corporate members assembled in their Annual Meeting,<sup>1</sup> and for two full sessions the questions at issue were debated at great length. Again, by an equally decisive majority, the Board reaffirmed the solemn decision announced at Des Moines, approved what the Committee had done, and declared the practical interpretation put by the Committee upon the action at Des Moines, by their action in the cases named above, to be the true interpretation, and authorized the continuance of the same caution in the future. Thus a second time, and under circumstances which gave to its action all the weight and solemnity of a final decree, the Board declared the hypothesis of future probation to be no part of the message of the gospel to men, and instructed its Committee to exercise renewed caution against committing the Board to its approval.

This action was explicit, and was understood by everybody to be explicit. And no new application which involved that hypothesis came to the Prudential Committee for more than two full years. It is true that one of the two gentlemen who had twice applied and had been twice declined, having received ordination as a foreign missionary at the instance of the Berkeley St. Church of Boston,

Committee had no option but to decline to appoint him.

The appearance of a new application involving the question of future probation, which was received October 29, 1889, and the further consideration of which, by action of the Committee, December 17, 1889, was postponed until the completion of the applicant's theological studies, and with which the public is to some degree familiar, has not materially changed the situation. The applicant seemed strongly drawn to the idea of future probation on speculative as well as scriptural grounds, and according to his own statement in the letter withdrawing his application, bearing date January 7, 1890, was led to seek appointment only upon the supposition that by the action of the Board at New York a new and more comprehensive basis of missionary appointments had been adopted. There was undoubtedly a certain confused impression in the public at large, diligently fostered and spread by those who had been dissatisfied with previous action of the Board, that the vote to make the President's Letter of Acceptance<sup>1</sup> the basis of action, (a vote taken without explanation and without argument), had opened the door to missionary appointment for such as had been excluded by the previous action of the Board on this subject at Des Moines and Springfield. There was, apparently, no ground for such an impression, beyond the ardent hopes and desires of those who received it; and all remaining doubts as to the bearing of that vote at New York upon previous action of the Board must have been dissipated by the introductory statements of the minute in this very case,<sup>2</sup> adopted by the Prudential Committee, December 17, 1889, which were drawn by the hand of President Storrs, and which plainly declare that, "In conformity with the instructions of the Board, given after discussion at the Annual Meeting at Des Moines in 1886,

<sup>1</sup>Missionary Herald, Dec. 1887, pp. 516-525.

<sup>2</sup>The Congregationalist, Dec. 26, 1889, p. 446.

and repeated a year later, by an overwhelming majority, at the Annual Meeting in Springfield, the Prudential Committee is under the weightiest obligation to carefully guard the Board from any committal to the doctrine of a probation after death, offering opportunities beyond the grave to attain by repentance eternal life. . . . It [the Prudential Committee] recognizes itself as absolutely inhibited, by the action at New York no less than by that which had preceded, from giving any approval to the doctrine of a future probation." Judging from the utterances of the religious press, including the recent letters of the President on this subject,<sup>1</sup> and also the responses thereto from corporate members of the Board, it seems clear that the Board by substantially the wonted majority holds firmly to the principles governing missionary appointments so clearly expressed by the President in his Letter of Acceptance, and reaffirmed in later utterances, principles which have prevailed throughout the history of the Board and which received special definition in the action of the Board at Des Moines and Springfield and New York. It may be thought needful, perhaps, to mention a still more recent offer of service which revealed a passing influence of the new theology upon the candidate's thoughts. This applicant, however, distinctly stated that in his view the hypothesis of future probation has no warrant in Scripture; and is also without any adequate philosophical support. He was thus found to occupy the same general position as the young woman, previously referred to, who received appointment in the summer of 1887, and whose appointment was approved by the Board at the ensuing Annual Meeting; and accordingly he was appointed.

These recent cases thus reveal the fact that the situation has not been materially changed by the action at New York; that, whatever may be the true signif-

<sup>1</sup>The Independent, Jan. 9, 1890, pp. 11-13, and Feb. 6, 1890, pp. 11, 12.



icance of what was done or said or thought at its last Annual Meeting, the Board has not changed its doctrinal ground, and is not ready to change it, in favor of any such unscriptural and decadent hypothesis as that of future probation and its connected theories.

Changes of this kind are not impossible ; the convictions of the churches which sustain and work through the Board, and of all evangelical Christendom, may in time be so modified as not only to open the way for such changes in the attitude of the Board, but even to demand that they be made. The Board is made up of some two hundred and fifty men, living in all parts of the country, chiefly members of Congregational churches, and leading representatives of the Christian communities to which they belong. They both share in the religious and theological movements of the times, and in an influential way help to shape those movements. Any important change in the religious beliefs of the churches will certainly extend to them, and through them will reach the Board, and register itself in the policy and administration of the Board and in the *personnel* of its officers. This course of things is natural and inevitable. And it transfers the whole matter of theological discussion from the platform of the Board to its natural and proper arena, the seminaries, the theological quarterlies, the pulpits, and the religious press. The theology which prevails in our seminaries and churches, in the religious press and in our homes, will certainly prevail in the councils and administration of the Board ; there is no power which can withstand it. And the true aim of those who desire to see

Christian people of the land, is false in principle, intrinsically weak in operation, and doomed to certain failure.

To sum up this course of events, we find that during four years only seven candidates for missionary service have appeared at the Committee Rooms in Boston whose cases were embarrassed by their attitude toward the hypothesis of future probation, and that only five of these failed of appointment on this ground. It further appears that the first five cases of this kind were presented between March, 1886, and June, 1887, and the other two cases have occurred within the last six months. It is of interest to note that at the time of their applications, all these persons were engaged in courses of study, one at Yale Divinity School, one at Wellesley College, one at Chicago Theological Seminary, and four at Andover Theological Seminary. The assertion is often made that great numbers of young men and women have been kept back from offering their services to the Board by the action of the Prudential Committee in declining to appoint certain of the candidates named above. There may be some ground for this statement, though no satisfactory proof has been offered, and from the nature of the case none can be offered; but no little doubt is thrown upon its probability by the fact<sup>1</sup> that the new missionaries sent out by the Board during the past three years have exceeded the number sent during the previous three years by forty-three, an increase of more than fifty per cent.

Had this new complexion and make-up of theological thought existed only in the minds of the seven candidates for missionary appointment named above, doubtless the action of the Committee in regard to them would have passed without criticism and almost without notice. Had the new opinions they entertained been found, outside their number, only in isolated instances, one here and another there, no public comment would have appeared,

<sup>1</sup>See Annual Reports of the Board from 1884 to 1889.

and no general interest in this incident of the Committee's work would have been awakened. The criticism that arose, with all the publicity and stir which grew out of that criticism, was due to the fact that these young men shared the views of their teachers or other influential friends, and were thus, in a sense, the representatives of a tendency in theological thought recently developed and somewhat widely current. The interests of a new movement in theology were thus touched, and all those who desired to see this new theology thrive and gain wider recognition, made these young men a rallying point, and sought to identify them in their relations to the Board with the advancement of the new opinions. Doubtless other motives have been operative, but the main reason for the wide and active criticism which has been directed to the action of the Committee in these cases is found in the facts above named.

A great mass of criticism and comment appearing in the daily and weekly secular press, based on ignorance or misunderstanding, pervaded by prejudice and personal motives, dealing recklessly in misstatements and pure inventions, appealing to passion and pride, and seemingly meant only to cater to a low sensationalism or the most flagrant partisanship,—a great mass of this discussion may at once be passed by and left wholly out of account. It would be a curious study, had we the time to enter into it, to consider how much of this strange literature was due to the mere desire to produce and enjoy what is sensational, and how much sprang from a deep, unconfessed sense that, in contending against the Prudential Committee and in behalf of the new theologians, they were unsettling the foundations of the historic faith and life of the church, and enlarging the area within which human liberty and passions may move without restraint and without rebuke.

It also lies one side of the discussion to dwell at length upon the more serious criticism to which the Pru-

dential Committee and officers of the Board have been subjected through these trying years ; but it deserves at least to be noted as we pass. The action of the Committee, in following strictly the explicit instructions of the Board, has been felt to be the practical arraignment of the new theology as wanting either in orthodoxy or in general currency, or in both ; and this action has been assailed with determined hostility, with bold invective, with accusations of ignorance, or bigotry, or malice, or narrowness, or denominational disloyalty. With scarcely an exception the Committee and Executive Officers have made no reply, but have left their deeds to speak for themselves ; and on every occasion in which their proceedings have been fully canvassed in public their vindication has been complete and overwhelming. And yet, after each such public and emphatic endorsement by the only body to which they were accountable, the old criticism, in all its vigor and want of candor and fraternal spirit, has been renewed in certain portions of the religious press, and has been caught up and widely echoed in the secular press. Few of those who have not given special attention to the various phases of this discussion can appreciate the keen, unrelenting, persistent, and often flagrantly partisan character of these religious critics and their numerous secular supporters. Probably not since the days of the old anti-slavery struggle has any body of men, equally stainless in reputation and faithful in official trusts, been subjected to so unrelenting and unscrupulous and unchristian misrepresentation and obloquy ; and rarely have men, who keenly felt such aspersions and who were sensible how ample an answer they had to make, borne themselves with more unfailing dignity and manly self-control and forbearing Christian charity.

The reason why the discussion over the question of future probation has intruded itself into the Annual Meetings and administration of the Board is not to be

found in any purpose or desire of the officers of the Board to regulate the doctrines of the churches, as has so often been alleged but never proved ; but in the persistent determination of the few, who for obvious reasons are personally interested in securing some authoritative endorsement of this speculation, to force the Committee to a virtual committal of itself and of the Board to the approval of this hypothesis and the new theology of which it forms a part, by sending into the field men who hold this hypothesis. Beneath all the movements of these four years adverse to the administration of the Board, back of all the criticism which has been rained upon the Home Secretary and the Committee, below all plans of reorganizing the Board, of the use of Councils, of closer union with the churches, of Congregationalizing the Board, this one partisan aim has been steadfastly maintained and never for a moment left out of sight. Whatever else has been proposed or said or done or left undone, this purpose has dominated all, and remains to-day the chief, not to say the only, menace to the peace of the churches and the unity of the Board.

It is greatly to be regretted that the criticism of the policy of the Board and the action of the Committee through all these years has rarely reached the merits of the case either in the doctrinal or in the practical phase of the question. It has had the qualities of campaign literature rather than those of serious argument ; it has dwelt on personal and incidental points rather than upon the principles and main features of the case ; and it has always been true, and has been felt to be true, that the chief interest at stake was never fairly set forth in public utterances, and was never intrusted to the issues of open and outspoken public debate. The opposition to the administration has dealt in charges, criticisms, and adverse judgments, more than in facts and proofs and dispassionate argument. The appeal to passion and partisan feeling has

been far too common; the appeal to reason and conscience, far too rare. The methods and spirit of partisan political strife have been so commonly resorted to, and have been so widely treated as legitimate and proper, as sensibly to demoralize the sentiment of the Christian community and lower the moral tone of the religious press. Even the *Andover Review*, which, on the whole, has borne itself with commendable self-restraint and has presented by far the ablest and most dispassionate discussion of the merits of the case on the side of opposition to the principles and practices of the Board; even this magazine has not wholly escaped the prevailing tendency to turn the appeal away from reason to feeling, and to put personal considerations in place of the merits of the case. All this speaks but poorly for our Christian manhood, candor, dignity, and self-restraint; the outlook thus suggested for the future of the church and the great interests of Christian civilization is anything but cheering.

The explanation of this state of things can easily be given. The animating purpose in the opposition to the action of the Committee and the decisions of the Board is not a desire to make the Board a more effective agency for the conversion of the world or to hasten the evangelization of the world—both legitimate and inspiring aims, with which every Christian instinct of every Christian heart must be in active sympathy. We speak now, not of professions and acknowledged aims, but of the plain facts of the case and of the necessary inferences from those facts. The opposition first made its appearance as an attempt to compel the appointment of a candidate whose views at certain points were at variance with the commonly received doctrinal views of the churches which support the Board; and it has maintained this practical aim through every step of its course, from that day to this. One of the latest utterances of the *Andover Review*<sup>1</sup> bears precisely to this end; it calls for practical

<sup>1</sup> The *Andover Review*, Jan. 1890, pp. 88-92.

assurances that the policy it opposes has been abandoned, and assures us that nothing will be satisfactory to those for whom it speaks but the actual commissioning of men who hold the new theology. This is the one deep underlying aim of the opposition, the one animating purpose of all its words and deeds, to secure the acceptance of its men by the Board, and thus to gain the practical endorsement of this venerable institution for the new theology. This is essentially a political aim, and its pursuit naturally draws to the use of the methods and spirit of a political campaign, and the achievement of its purpose would be necessarily a partisan victory.

On the other hand, those who administer the affairs of the Board, the Committee and Secretaries, act under instructions, are engrossed in the vast and varied details of a great enterprise, and have neither the leisure nor the taste for active controversy. They have naturally preferred to let their deeds speak for them, and have scrupulously refrained from public utterances, even when seemingly called for in self-defence and abundantly justified by the occasion. The annual meetings of the Board, where their official acts pass in full review, have uniformly brought absolute vindication; and the officials of the Board have preferred to wait in silence under most unjust aspersions till this public answer should be given. The situation has been peculiar in more than one respect. The opposition has been personal, partisan, and aimed at a definite, practical end. It has dealt in attacks, criticisms, adverse judgments, and but slightly in calm and ordered argument. The administration has pursued the even tenor of its way under this storm of misrepresentation and assault in dignified silence and Christian patience and unswerving loyalty. And year by year the Corporate Members in Annual Meeting have endorsed the administration and authoritatively sanctioned their action.

The question immediately at issue has never been the

truth of the new views, or the liberty of these young men to hold and teach them. The first of these questions is a theological one; exegesis and metaphysics and logic and the testimony of history are rightly appealed to for the answer. It is much to be desired that on the proper arena, and in the customary way, wholly apart from practical issues and the passions which great public assemblies inspire, our masters in thought and argument, our great teachers in the Scriptures, in theology, and in history, may take up this question in good earnest and give us the best answer the times and our powers permit. The second question, namely the liberty of these young men, or of any other men, young or old, to hold and teach the new views, is answered already, and is answered alike by all. This liberty is an intrinsic part of our Protestant birthright and of our civil and religious institutions. This right no one assails or even questions. The real merits of the case connected with the American Board do not in the remotest degree touch this right, or in any way affect its exercise.

The real question before the Committee has been one of fidelity in the administration of a trust. The Committee is appointed to interpret and carry out the will of the Board. The Board exists to receive and disburse gifts placed in its hands for a specific purpose, namely the evangelization of the heathen world. The work of the Board has a definite origin and a well-known history, and has been conducted from the beginning upon clearly stated and universally recognized principles of faith and action. The message it seeks to proclaim, and which it commissions its agents to deliver, is the truth of the Holy Scriptures and the systems of doctrines therein contained as interpreted and held by evangelical Christendom through eighteen centuries; because this is the gospel which the churches that sustain its work embrace and hold as the very truth and grace of the living God. The



Committee and the executive officers hold their place and discharge their duties in fulfilment of this great aim, and are bound in loyalty to see that the agents commissioned for the work abroad are in harmony with the great aim of the Board and personally qualified to carry it out.

This point needs a somewhat fuller statement. The American Board is not an ecclesiastical court; it was never designed for this service, and it has never attempted this service. Neither is it the guardian or advocate of the orthodox faith; it is not constituted for such an office, and it has never deemed itself called to such a task. It has a distinctly practical aim, and it has followed this aim with singular steadfastness and simplicity through all the fourscore years of its glorious history; it seeks to plant and sustain Christian agencies in the unevangelized parts of the earth, in order to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ, and gather churches of true believers, and nourish a self-supporting and self-propagating Christian life among those peoples in the most direct and effective way possible. The evangelization of the world is its one great purpose; and all its activities and methods are shaped to this one end. It has nothing to do with shaping the doctrinal views or the ecclesiastical practices of Christendom; it is absorbed in the effort to convey the blessings of the Christian life and faith and worship, as the Bible reveals them and as Christian lands possess them, to all who lie outside their present range. All forms of faith and worship and life unknown or unwelcome to the evangelical communions, it passes by, as having no proper place in its message. Such discriminations are a simple necessity of its existence and work, and for the greater part they are made without formal or corporate action, by the self-protecting energies of the Christian public for which the Board acts and by which it is constituted. Any novelties of thought or opinion, of whatever origin or degree of prevalence, are beyond its pale, for the very reason that they do not

yet form an acknowledged part of the faith of Christendom. It would be a clear abuse of the powers of the Board for it to recognize any merely local or individual opinion, or even to seem to give it a place by the side of the common faith of the churches. With the several schools of theology as such, the Board has nothing to do; it cannot discriminate between Old School and New School, between Calvinism and Arminianism; it is not adapted to such uses, even if it were permissible for it under its constitution to attempt this office. The message which its agents bear is the gospel of God's dear Son, in its fulness, without enlargement, without diminution, unmingled with human speculations, as the Scriptures reveal it and as evangelical Christian thought apprehends it and receives it; just that, nothing more and nothing less. It must see to it that the agents whom it commissions know this gospel truly, believe in it heartily, hold to it purely, and are capable of teaching it with clearness and with power. The service to which it calls its agents is special, arduous, exacting, rendered at great cost in a distant land and a foreign tongue; all considerations of wisdom and prudence demand that only well-approved, sound, and unquestionable candidates should be sent. The interest at stake on the foreign field is too sacred, the character of the service is too delicate and important, the bearing of even a single serious mistake is too wide and enduring, to permit any relaxing of vigilance, any carelessness of scrutiny, in selecting the laborers to be employed. An unevangelical teacher might within a few years mar a work that it had required many hands and long years to build. It is, therefore, no mistaken sense of duty, no narrowness of view, no blameworthy exactness of inquiry, that debars from the service of the Board, Unitarians, Universalists, Restorationists, Deists, and Agnostics. None of these persons, nor any others who hold equally unevangelical and faulty faiths, are thus

ruled out of the field of Foreign Missions; it is as open to them, one and all, as it was to the first organizers of the Board, to set on foot and sustain a similar agency of their own. The personal liberty of those whose services are declined is not touched; they may hold and teach such views as command their approval wherever they can gain a hearing, unquestioned and undisturbed by the Board. The Board simply reserves to itself the liberty of selecting such agents as give promise of being able to do its work sympathetically and effectively, and in harmony with its laborers already in the field.

These principles all friends of the Board will heartily admit and maintain. And it is upon these principles that the Board has enjoined upon its Prudential Committee great caution in dealing with candidates who are hospitable to the hypothesis of future probation and kindred errors. Without attempting to determine whether that hypothesis is probable or improbable, its obvious tendencies are remarked, and the Committee is instructed not to commit the Board to its approval. This is in perfect keeping with the practical aim of the Board; and it leaves the merits of the hypothesis to be tried out on the proper arena of theological discussion, without the least embarrassment to the proper work of the Board. The plain fact of the case is, and most people are ready to acknowledge it, that this hypothesis has no place whatever in the accepted faith or opinions of evangelical Christendom or of any distinct portion thereof; and to many, probably to the far greater part of the constituency of the Board, this dogma appears not simply without support from Scripture or reason, but positively anti-scriptural and dangerous.

The question whether those who entertain it are free

ready thrice announced by the Board, at Des Moines, at Springfield, and at New York, is not likely to be recalled, or modified, for many years to come. The question whether this hypothesis is in harmony with Scripture and reason, and thus is entitled to cordial recognition in the evangelical churches (an entirely different question and on all accounts the first of the two to be decided), though practically answered in the negative, is still in present discussion. And this discussion, it is to be hoped, will go on and be pushed more vigorously with a searching scrutiny of every argument from Scripture or reason, or Christian experience which can be alleged for this hypothesis and the new theology of which it is a subordinate feature; and in such discussion all will rejoice, and truth alone will be the gainer. The agitations in the Presbyterian churches of Scotland and America, now so energetic over the question of Revision, but in reality reaching far more deeply and touching every principal element of the Christian faith, are a part of the same wide movement, and will tend to clear up the nature of the controversy and the magnitude of the interests involved. We have no fears for the result. Learning, criticism, discussion, these all favor truth and tend to its clearer discovery. And it is the supreme interest of every church, of every sect, of every soul, to know the truth unmingled with error, undimmed by prejudice, untouched by ignorance, as it appears to the All-seeing One himself. And the truth of God, so apprehended and so ascertained by this generation, will prove itself the light of the world, and the best hope of mankind, and the guardian of man's present welfare and eternal salvation, as certainly and as exclusively as it was in apostolic days, in the ages of persecution and martyrdom, in the great missionary epochs of the Middle Ages, and in the glorious prime of the Reformation age. Indeed, it will be the same truth in all essential features, drawn from the same divine original,

bearing upon the same divine order, concerning itself with the same great realities, as the Christian world from the first ages has known, has believed in, has confessed, and has everywhere proclaimed. Salvation is its mighty theme; its heart and living core is "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and forever." "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." The creeds of the earlier and of the later days have a sacredness and power which enshrine them in the lasting memory and love of all Christian hearts, because they embody in words dear to many generations the august thoughts and facts which lie at the heart of the gospel, which have to sinful man a perennial sweetness and power, which can no more fade from men's nobler thoughts than the sun and stars from the wheeling heavens. But these later generations must speak their faith in terms and phrases of their own, while they cherish the sacred memorials of the kindred faiths of former days; and the effort thus to embody in fitting and expressive forms the sum of Christian truth as it is apprehended in this age is both wise and just and full of promise. Nothing will suffer from it but that which is intrinsically weak and ready to perish; the truth of God, more clearly seen and more warmly loved, will gain in power and shine with added glory, as the sun in the glowing heavens when the night and storm have passed away.