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ARTICLE VIII.

THE AMERICAN BOARD AND SPECULATIVE
THEOLOGY.

THE activity of the new departure theologians at Andover continues to tax to the utmost the wisdom of the Prudential Committee of the American Board, and the capacity of the Congregational church polity to guard itself against the incursion of vital error. The approaching meeting at Springfield seems likely to be even more eventful than the one a year ago at Des Moines. It is becoming more and more evident that temporizing measures will be of little avail. The theological questions at issue are not such as can be overlooked, or regarded as of secondary importance. At bottom they are the issues which have separated the Universalists, the Unitarians, and the rationalizing heretics in general from the evangelical body of Christians. The doctrines involved pertain, first of all, to the sufficiency of the Scriptures as a guide to religious faith; and, secondarily, to the integrity of that central group of evangelical doctrines including and clustering about the atonement; viz., the extent of man's natural powers, the guilt of sin, the hazard of impenitence, and the self-imposed restrictions of Divine Wisdom under which salvation is offered to men.

These are deep questions, upon which the human mind in all ages has been active, and upon which it will ever continue to be active. No mechanical adjustment of church polity has ever been able to repress the tendency of the human mind to speculate upon them. Speculation upon them has been curbed only by profound reverence for the authority of the word of God. Nor does enforced subscription to a cast-iron creed seem to be any more availing. Indeed, if we mistake

not, the effect of subscription upon the Andover professors has been unfortunate in stimulating speculation in unlawful directions. Like Paul, these professors were alive once without the law; but when the yoke of their legal subscription pressed heavily upon their necks, their speculative tendencies revived, and they became dead to the ordinary considerations governing men in the administration of such public trusts. We doubt if there has ever been a more striking instance of mental confusion on the part of eminent men than is exhibited in the efforts of the Andover professors to convince themselves and the world that the doctrine of future probation could be legitimately taught under the creed of Andover Seminary.

In determining the proper course of action at Springfield, several principles of public policy should be well considered and some errors and fallacies carefully avoided. In the present limits we can do but little more than indicate a few dangers, and emphasize some of the principles that should guide the action of the Board.

1. And, first, while it is important at all times to avoid undue personalities, it is necessary to bear in mind that there can be no conflict of ideas without ultimate conflict of the persons who cherish the ideas. Ideas are not mere abstractions; they are the property of persons. Ideas are of no account except somebody holds them. When a serious error is lodged in the mind, and becomes embodied in the activities of any considerable class of persons, the error cannot be opposed without opposing these persons. In the present case, therefore, undue fear of coming into conflict even with formerly trusted associates, and of thwarting some of their cherished plans, must not deter any one from manifesting his loyalty to the truth. Loyalty to truth is a more imperative duty than loyalty to men.

2. Nor is it possible, in the present juncture, to do one's duty and remain in a neutral position. It is a most serious mistake of interpretation to regard the words of Gamaliel as inspired when he advised neutrality with reference to the

apostles, saying, "Refrain from these men, and let them alone: for if this counsel be of men, it will come to nought: but if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it." Upon this principle, there would be no political parties, no missionary societies, and little active opposition to error in any form.

The church is not in the world to be an indifferent spectator of the progress of events. There are, indeed, some things which the church may well let alone, since they lie, to a considerable degree, outside of her province. Where there is no clear "Thus saith the Lord" to guide her, the church may stand aside to see what wisdom the development of events may bring. The most of us recognize this to be the case in respect to political action. Politics is so much a question of temporal policy, and deals so largely with questions of casuistry, that it is not best for the church to become entangled in its ephemeral and exciting personal contentions. But in respect to the maintenance of the faith once delivered to the saints, and to the policy to be pursued in giving efficiency to the gospel, the church cannot take a neutral position; since, for the very purpose of preserving and propagating the gospel, the church has been raised up, and has come to the kingdom.

3. It is a mistake of many to suppose that the breadth of a society's platform is a measure of its efficiency. Whereas, the truth is that intensity and comprehensiveness are to a certain degree exclusive of each other; the one varying, within certain limits, in inverse ratio to the other. The professor of all sciences is not so likely to promote knowledge as is the professor of a single science. If anything is to be learned by the church from the tendencies of modern times, it is the effectiveness of division of labor and of specialization of function. A smaller number of people who are in hearty accord with each other are more effective in their labor than a larger body could be who have no strong bond of union, and who agree only on the most elementary points. We once found a Baptist who was so anxious to be a tract distributor, and esteemed the prerogatives of that position so

much higher than the principles of his church, that he was willing to distribute tracts favoring infant baptism, under the vague impression that they might do some good. Thus many, at the present time, are so taken with the word "missionary" that they think it hardly worth while to inquire what sort of a missionary it is they are sending out, and so are ready to take up with almost anybody who offers himself for missionary service, cherishing the hope that almost any sort of a man, transported to missionary ground, will sow some good seed, and that tares will not readily grow in heathen soil. Whereas it is more difficult to uproot tares sown in heathen lands than in the trodden paths of civilization. Heathenism is first-class soil for tares. No; what is wanted in the missionary service is men of special qualifications, both of mind and heart, who are well grounded in their faith and who hold fast to sound doctrine. The victory over heathenism is to be gained by Gideon's band, rather than by a mixed multitude of wavering adherents.

4. In the present crisis there is special danger of cherishing a false humility, and of encouraging an exaggerated estimate of human ignorance. The processes by which the new departure theologians are carrying their points with unsuspecting minds are essentially those of agnosticism. Properly enough, the new departure writers profess great reverence for the mysteries of the divine government, and make much of the acknowledged fact that God's ways are above our ways and his thoughts above our thoughts. Their great error lies in practically ignoring the clear revelation of the Bible concerning the actual exigencies of man's present existence. The proof-texts of the Bible upon which Christians have usually relied to determine their faith with respect to the things of the future life are taken up in detail, and, without admitting their cumulative force, are one by one subjected to that kind of criticism which in biblical literature is called "destructive," and in science, "agnostic." A distinguished criminal lawyer, when asked once, by a young man who was about to become his junior partner, what had been the secret of his success,

replied, that it lay in the policy which he had always pursued, of denying everything on the other side, and demanding the evidence. By this kind of sophistry an ordinary jury may readily be thrown into confusion in regard to the simplest matters of fact. Few are aware, until their attention is called to it, how difficult it is to present formal proof of every single item in the inventory of facts by which we live and move and have our being. It is Emerson, if we remember correctly, who illustrates this spirit of agnosticism in the case of a child who was learning his letters, and who accepted the teacher's word without question until coming to the letter Z, when, with a look of blank incredulity, he suddenly refused to be receptive any longer, and straightening himself up exclaimed, "I don't believe it! How do you know? Prove it."

5. This reference to the spirit of agnosticism calls for a more explicit statement of the underlying fallacy which induces that mental habit. The whole subject of religious faith in general, as well as the system of positive Christianity, is, at the present time, in special danger from the tendency to set up or silently accept standards of proof with reference to religious facts and Christian doctrines which are impracticable and unreasonable. Even the late venerable President of the Board, in a thoughtless moment, yielded to this tendency when he proposed, as a *reductio ad absurdum*, that the Board should boldly face the question of refusing to send forth as missionaries any persons who were not as certain of the final condemnation of all who die impenitent as they are of the existence of God. It must have been in some fit of momentary forgetfulness that so keen a logician, and so convincing a writer upon Christian evidences as Doctor Hopkins should have given support to such a fallacy as this. For, has he not variously, and in a most convincing manner, instilled into the minds of his students, and taught the world, the true principle formally stated by Butler, that "probability is the guide of life," and that many of the most important concerns upon which we are compelled to act with vigor are those which can by no means be freed from doubt? The judge is always care-

ful to charge the jury that they are to be satisfied with what is called "a *reasonable* amount of evidence." If the standards of evidence were allowed to be set up in court which many are now demanding for the facts and doctrines of Christianity, there would be no convictions, and complete paralysis would settle down upon both the judicial and the executive departments of government. If the jury were to wait until they were as certain that the prisoner committed murder as they are of God's existence, no one would ever be hanged. In theology, as well as in courts and everywhere else, it is the part of wisdom, and indeed the very necessity of life, to learn to be content with a reasonable degree of evidence.

6. The question then comes back upon the merits of the case, as to whether the doctrine that the awards of eternity are proportioned according to the deeds of this life, which has all along prevailed in the Christian church and swayed its activity, is supported by a reasonable amount of evidence; and, secondly, whether the doctrine is of sufficient vital importance to be made fundamental in the organization of a missionary society.

(1) That the doctrine involves difficulties too deep for the human reason to solve cannot be denied. But in endeavoring to construct a theodicy by the rejection of this doctrine, and the substitution of Dorner's postulate concerning the offers of mercy in the future world to some who die impenitent, we shall not find that we have avoided all difficulty and come out into a clear field of rational concepts. In fleeing from the ills we have, we shall find that we have fallen into others which we knew not of. One of the new difficulties is, that, by the adoption, even provisionally, of the theory of future probation for some, we are compelled to maintain an untenable and unreasonable attitude towards the Bible, and to throw discredit upon many lines of cumulative evidence which go to establish the authority and sufficiency of our Sacred Scriptures.

Leaving, therefore, the mysteries of theodicy where they belong, among those secret counsels of God reserved for our successful study during the limitless ages of the future life, and

accepting the Bible as both an authoritative and a sufficient guide in the matters of Christian faith, let us glance at the evidence that it teaches that God's offer of mercy to sinners is limited to this life. As bearing upon this point, we have

(a) The presumption arising from the exalted dignity of the nature bestowed upon man at his creation. Man is made in God's image. According to the teachings of Paul, man's capacities are such that the invisible things of God are clearly seen by the human mind from the creation of the world; so that he is without excuse. The heathen mind is not in that half-formed, unsophisticated, guileless state which the new departure theologians imply. The heathen are everywhere said in the Bible, and are found in fact by the missionaries, to be great sinners, with that sense of condemnation and guilt which unmistakably reveals the essential dignity of the human mind, and the truth of the apostle's statements concerning its inherent knowledge of all essential moral truth.

(b) Both in the Old Testament and in the New it is clearly intimated that the operation of the Holy Spirit, in giving efficiency to the truth and securing regeneration, is by no means limited to that phase of truth referred to under the phrase "the historic Christ." Enoch walked with God, Noah was a preacher of righteousness, Abraham responded to the divine call, Melchizedek was a true priest of the Most High, and Job was a pattern of righteousness, together with a multitude of others, all simply under the coöperating influences of the Holy Spirit and the inferior rays of light which characterized the pre-Christian world. And in those pre-Christian days there was light enough, withal, to make gigantic sinners of those who rejected it, and to justify the monumental infliction of divine wrath upon cities like Sodom and Gomorrah, and tyrants like Nebuchadnezzar and Pharaoh, who resisted the light they had.

(c) The general policy of divine election revealed in the Bible involves the doctrine of the general sinfulness and universal condemnation of the heathen race. The gospel, both in its Old Testament intimations and in its New Testa-

ment unfoldings, is a *special* call to repentance, superadded, as a matter of grace, to the general call which all men have received and despised. Throughout the whole Bible it stands out clearly that the dissemination of this special call, together with all its peculiar advantages, is to be through the instrumentality of God's chosen people. Those who have rejected the general light of nature cannot claim from God the further light of the gospel as a matter of justice. But if they will not repent under the light they have, they can expect only that further light which Divine Wisdom may see fit to give. This gracious character of the gospel appears to be an essential element in its final success. Strange as it may seem, it is still true that God, with all his infinite power, has in his system of grace limited himself, in the proclamation of the specific truths concerning Christ, to the degree to which he can secure the willing coöperation of his children while on earth. God did not disseminate the knowledge of Christ by the use of his naked omnipotence, but he ordained apostles, and sent forth preachers, and established a church, upon whose coöperation he was to depend. This is God's plan everywhere revealed in the Bible. Upon the church rests the responsibility of converting the world through the use of divinely appointed means. The responsibility is a solemn one, from whose burden we are not at liberty to relieve our consciences by the seductive and baseless hopes held out by the new departure theologians.

(*d*) Nor are we limited to these considerations of a more general nature for light upon this subject. We have the words of Christ and of his chosen apostles. But with all their tender interest in lifting the burdens of humanity, and their anxiety to justify the character of God before man, none of these made the hypothesis of future probation a corner-stone in their theodicy, or used the apparent relief afforded by that doctrine as a bid for the favorable consideration of their message to the unevangelized nations. If there were merely this silence of the sacred writers concerning so important a subject, and one where speculation is evidently

so hazardous, it should bid us pause, and should avail to hold in check our own speculative tendencies.

The proper limitation to speculation in theology is a matter of so much importance that we may pause for its more specific consideration at this point, even at the risk of interrupting somewhat the thread of the argument. Speculation has in theology about the same limits of propriety which it has in business. In business the extent to which one can lawfully speculate depends upon the amount and ownership of the capital. A man of great wealth which is his own, may take larger risks than one whose wealth is limited, or who is but the agent of trust funds. To run hazardous risks with the property of widows and orphans is not accounted lawful in business circles. But the Christian is merely a steward, and has the gospel only in trust. The premises on which he may speculate are by no means unlimited. The Bible limits them. God has reserved for himself the secrets of his wisdom which he will reveal in due time, but not now. The absurdity of this unwillingness to have any bounds set to speculation is strikingly illustrated in much of the modern rationalistic biblical criticism. It is not uncommon to hear it said, that to accept the testimony of Christ and the apostles concerning the authority and interpretation of the Old Testament will limit freedom of thought and inquiry, and prevent us from accepting other views which may seem intrinsically more reasonable. To all which we reply that it is the appropriate province of the best witnesses to limit the amount of credence given to inferior testimony. Freedom of thought is not a thing to be sought for its own sake. The prevalence of the truth is the one desirable thing and the true object of all genuine investigation. The genuine investigator is only too thankful when some clear ray of light warns him off from the more profitless lines of research. It is to be feared that much of the theological instruction coming into vogue in this country, as well as that which has for some time had possession of several of the universities of Germany, is more engaged with finding out what air castles can be built out of doubtful pas-

sages of Scripture and uncertain principles of ethics than it is to set in order the evidences of the certainty of those things which are most fully believed amongst us.

(e) But the sacred writers have not limited themselves to mere negative instruction and silence upon the question of future probation. The thunderings of Jehovah upon Mount Sinai were not more calculated to inspire the soul with awe, and fill the heart with trembling, than are the words of the Saviour himself and of his chosen apostles concerning the hazard of all men and the fate of the godless heathen world. An impassable gulf across which no messengers of mercy are permitted to pass is represented as separating Dives and Lazarus in the future world. They had Moses and the prophets. Let them hear them. The Son of man cometh suddenly to reward every man according to his work. The virgins who were found without oil in their lamps, and the servants who neglected to watch, found no opportunity to retrieve their fortune when the bridegroom appeared; but the door was shut, and they knocked in vain to have it opened. Blasphemy against God, and against the Son of man, who is the historic Christ, can be forgiven; but blasphemy against the Holy Ghost—that Spirit that strove with the antediluvian race and leaves no man without witness of the goodness of God—shall never be forgiven, either in this world or the world to come. At the final judgment *all nations* shall be gathered together, when the righteous and the wicked shall be separated, the righteous going to everlasting life while the wicked are banished to everlasting punishment. And this, not for faith exercised or sins committed after death, but for their treatment of God's children here in this world. The last warning in the Apocalypse mentions, as the only ground upon which the wicked are doomed to remain outside the walls of the golden city, sins—peculiarly characteristic of heathendom—which can be committed only in the body. In the terrible indictment brought by the apostle Paul against heathen Rome in the first chapters of his Epistle addressed to the inhabitants of that city, there is no attempt at palliation

on the plea of moral imbecility ; but the heathen in Rome declared to have fallen into the most abominable sins with their eyes open, or under a judicial blindness which they had brought upon themselves. Knowing that these sins were worthy of death, they still had delight in those who committed them. Nero and his hosts of admirers and imitators were not imbeciles ; they were giants in sin, as multitudes are every heathen land to-day. It is trifling with the plain verities of the case to dilute the apostle's warning that "all shall die death cometh judgment" by inserting a phrase so that it shall read "after death, and after God through thousands of years in the spirit-world has plied the soul with the ameliorating influences of grace, then if it remains impenitent it will have to fear the judgment of God." It is trifling, also, with the plain verities of the case to explain away, as referring merely to Christians, that other comprehensive and ringing sentence of the great apostle to the Gentiles : For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ to receive according to the deeds done in the body.

But, in the limitations of this summary, we cannot pause to dwell longer upon the biblical evidence which has in all ages constrained the evangelical church to reject all forms of restorationism. Time and again, from the days of Origen down, the church has been compelled to face these speculative speculations and extra-biblical arguments ; and as frequently has it been forced, by its loyalty to the word of God and historic Christian truth, to reaffirm its solemn belief that the purposes of God's saving grace are, in his wisdom, permitted to operate for the conversion of the soul only within the limits of the earthly life.

(2) Connected with this consideration of biblical evidence we should also consider the fundamental character of the points at issue. For, the extent to which we should insist upon the maintenance of a doctrine depends not only upon its truth, but upon the importance of its character. Truths are arranged in a hierarchy. There are truths celestial ; there are truths terrestrial. There are truths which to disregard, would

sudden and ir retrievable ruin, while there are other truths that may be disregarded with comparative impunity. In the experience of the church, as well as in the nature of the case, the biblical doctrine that this world is the great arena in which the human race is to struggle for mastery over sin would seem to be fundamental. Without it as an underlying conviction, giving tone to the experience and shape to the plans of the Christian church, there has not been, and from the nature of the case there cannot well be, hearty, fervid, and continuous evangelical missionary activity. Permanent and effective missionary activity arises from something far deeper than that effervescence of sentiment manifesting itself upon the perception of temporary suffering however great. It is the *ir retrievableness* of the ruin in which impenitent heathen are involved which has all along acted as a necessary incentive to the highest degree of missionary interest. The urgency resting upon us to enter upon the self-denying and wearying activities of missionary work is, that, in the orderings of Divine Providence, the salvation of a part of the heathen world is made to depend upon our faithfulness and activity. Whatsoever we bind on earth is bound in heaven. If we warn not the wicked and they perish in their sins, the blood of their souls will be required at our hands. Whosoever converteth a sinner from the error of his ways saveth a soul from death. Our activities for those who are in distress cannot permanently exceed our apprehension of the seriousness of their distress and the hazard to them of delay. It is true that this is not the only consideration. Active sympathy is promoted not merely by the presentation of the hazard and distress, but also by the presentation of some practical means of relief. And these practical means we have in the promises of the gospel and in the agencies of our Board of Missions.

7. From all these considerations it is increasingly evident that the questions at issue at the coming meeting of the Board at Springfield cannot be disposed of by any temporizing policy. The proposition to have the Board shift from

itself to Congregational councils its responsibility for the doctrines propagated by its agents in the heathen world is, in the present emergency, equivalent to a proposition for the Board itself to surrender its traditions, its history, its prerogatives, its chartered pledges, its hold upon the public confidence, and its divine commission. As Dr. Ross so clearly indicated in the July number of the *BIBLIOTHECA SACRA*, Congregational councils are not adapted to meet an emergency like that pressing upon the Board at the present time. Congregational councils are local, and not national. A packed council is an abomination, and, as Dr. Ross indicated, and as any one can see at a glance, it is easy enough, and the temptation would be irresistible, to multiply packed councils upon the questions at issue in the present crisis. Many local councils would be packed by their environment. There are localities specially infected with the seductive heresy now striving to engraft itself not upon a branch, but upon the very stock itself, of the American Board. With such activity as has been manifested for the last two or three years in certain quarters, a stream of candidates infected with the heresy could enter the missionary work, through the channels opened by councils in one or two infected localities, sufficient to flood the whole field. The dike once opened could not be easily closed. The Board will do well to pause before abandoning the lines of protection so industriously built up in the past, and behind which it has labored with such long-continued and glorious success.

8. Nor can we hope for relief in the present emergency through the adoption of the ingenious ecclesiastical machinery so fully and ably presented by Dr. Ross in the article to which we have already referred. The plan to have the Board reorganize itself through the action of state associations in nominating corporate members could in any event meet the present emergency only upon condition that the new departure theologians were willing to hold their questions in abeyance until the sentiment of the churches should be determined by this revolutionary process. But it is clear enough that

the more zealous new departure men are not willing to await the natural development of public sentiment. For some reason or other they have determined to take the Board by storm, and are *demanding* that their heresies be acknowledged by the Board, at once, as sound and harmless doctrine.

But this is not the only objection to Dr. Ross's method. Another difficulty is that the American Board is not a denominational organization. Several denominations were active in its origin and throughout its early history, and a considerable portion of its vested interests have been built up by the contributions of other denominations than the Congregational.

Again, it is contrary to the traditions and the spirit of the Congregational body to encumber its local and state associations with such a class of interests as is connected with the plan proposed by Dr. Ross. It would introduce into those bodies the politics of the stronger forms of church organization without the corrective restraints which their traditions and precedents provide.

Indeed, as we reflect upon the subject, it seems to us that the machinery of the American Board is now as nearly perfect as it can well be. The sole object of the Board is to propagate the gospel among the heathen. To accomplish this purpose not only must there be actual wisdom in the administration of its financial and other administrative interests—such as the selection of missionaries and their location and direction in the field, but also this fitness and wisdom of the Board as a body to perform the duties assumed by them must be so manifest to the churches, both in the public action of the Board and in the manner in which its members are elected, that the Board shall command and be likely to continue to command the general confidence of the Christian public from which contributions are to be expected. Now such, we believe, is the present organization of the Board. The wisdom of its actual administration is amply sustained by the results up to the present time; and the manner in which the corporate members have been selected is the surest guarantee it is possible to have that they represent the highest degree

of missionary wisdom and interest which the churches possess. They have been elected not at one time, under the excitement and perturbation of mind incident to such a theological controversy as is now raging, but they have been elected year by year during the last quarter of a century from the whole body of pastors and laymen most interested in and devoted to the work. Without doubt, the Christian public will ever prefer to repose in the judgment of a body of men thus selected, rather than in that of any body selected specially to represent the current phases of thought that may happen to prevail during any short period in the progress of missionary work. In the organization of the American Board there seems to be the highest combination of provisions for the proper representation of both the conservative and the progressive element. The true principle in all such bodies is to have them organized so that they shall make haste slowly, so that the work of the past cannot be easily overturned by some sudden impulse, claiming, indeed, to be from heaven, but of whose real origin no one can be certain until there has been time to try the spirits most active in promoting the change. It is necessary for governments to have constitutions which shall serve as a check upon the inconsiderate and hasty action to which all great bodies are liable. It is thus that the progressive element in England is restrained and guided by her unwritten constitution of legal precedents, and that the United States, and every State in particular, holds in check its most popular legislative branch by written constitutions and by a senate which cannot so readily be changed by popular clamor. The world has had so much experience of the intoxication of new ideas that now it everywhere puts itself in position where it can have a chance to appeal from Philip drunk to Philip sober. Missionary organizations are composed of men. They are also in the world; and cannot free themselves from the ordinary liabilities of human nature. No; the present difficulty does not arise from any fault in the machinery. The machinery of the American Board is well-nigh perfect as it is. At any

rate the excitement of the present hour is not a favorable time in which to tinker it.

9. In enumerating the considerations and weighing the motives urging to faithfulness in the present juncture of affairs in the Board, we cannot wholly overlook the obligations the present managers are under to regard the wishes of the original founders, and of the former contributors to the Board, together with the stipulations of the charter under which they act. It is true that the past is not to control the present and the future in any unreasonable manner. But, if we use the accumulations of the past which have been gathered for specific purposes, common honesty requires us to pay some attention to the views of the founders and the conditions under which the work has heretofore been done. It were better to organize another society than greatly to pervert the object of an existing society. To have the new departure men draw off, and form a new missionary society for the propagation of an amended gospel with a future probation plank in it, would be a calamity from which we hope the good sense of the churches and the good providence of God will spare us. But to have the old Board, with all its historic traditions and the prestige of its past victories, surrender to the clamor of a comparatively small number of new departure propagandists would be like setting Sampson to grinding in the mills of the uncircumcised Philistines, and would involve the whole missionary work of our churches in a disaster from which it would not recover in half a century.

10. But, fidelity to God and to his word and to the interests of his kingdom is the supreme motive, before which all others weigh as nothing upon the Christian's conscience. The church and her missionary societies have a charter from heaven. Their commission is from God. Incalculable injury is likely to be done by the numerous oracular but heedless and false assertions (some of them, we are sorry to say, by men in eminent positions, who ought to know better) by which the general public and the rising generation of ministers are

being persuaded that the world is on the eve of great startling discoveries in theology, and that theology is all in a flux, and ready to be recast in moulds which will make it scarcely recognizable to the early fathers who founded the American Board, and to the early missionaries whom they sent out, and, indeed well-nigh unrecognizable to the mingled men of the present generation. Nothing can be farther from the truth than this. Christianity is not the product of the nineteenth century, but of the first. Improvement is not to be expected in theology as they are in the physical sciences. *The truth cannot be improved.* The truth may be but imperfectly apprehended, and by further revelations and additional discoveries our conceptions of it may be enlarged and made more complete and symmetrical. But the perfect statements of Christian truth were made at the beginning by the Author of the Christian system, and by the apostles whom he chose and whom he promised to assist that they might call to mind all that he had said, and receive from him revelations concerning things that were to come. The perfect "Christian consciousness" was that possessed by the companions of Christ in the first century of the Christian era. We are to preach the gospel of Christ, and not the gospel of Dörner. To learn the truth which it is our commission to preach among the heathen nations, we are to go to the law and the testimonies for light. In that light we are to abide, and are solemnly warned against venturing out into the darkness beyond, with nothing to guide us but sparks of our own kindling. Gail Hamilton, we know, thinks differently, holding that even the subscribers to the Andover creed can, according to their charter, sail out upon the limitless ocean of speculation with little to guide them more definite than the religious suggestions which the human mind can gather from "geology, biology, astronomy, and chemistry, . . . what illustrates or elucidates the real mode of creation and properties of matter; . . . the discoveries and utilities of steam, electricity, the story of the rocks and the suns, the suggestion of the skeleton and the embryo; . . . the history of humani-

language, race, growth, migration, the rise and fall of nations and of men from the first rude trace of primeval man upon the earth to the last item in the morning newspaper." But, sparkling as is the style of this writer, we have not yet sufficient evidence that she has a recognized standing among the prophets. The American Board is to be guided in its action by the solemn pleadings of the divine word, and not by the ill-considered clamor of a certain portion of the secular press.