

ARTICLE IX.

THE NEW DEPARTURE AND MISSIONS.

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A WORKING theory of missions must be the result of long experience. The missionary comes into the field with new forces, and with a message strange and new to the people, and he has to meet difficulties, embarrassments, and oppositions entirely unforeseen. The people conceal from him their real thoughts and intentions. They sometimes feign beliefs in order to deceive and lead him astray. It is months, and sometimes years, before he can feel sure that he thoroughly understands his environment and has fathomed all the resources of deception.

One thing alone secures him. He comes with a divine message, clear and simple, and he is to deliver it with the authority given him in the word of God. "All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth. Go ye, *therefore*, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you: and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." This is the solid foundation of the missionary's work, and it gives him calmness and assurance and direction in all his dangers and embarrassments. He knows that his work shall not be in vain in the Lord.

But then he is not alone in the work. It is a work of co-operation. He has associates whom he must consult. He must work in harmony with them. No appearance of dissension should ever be allowed among the brethren and co-workers. They have numerous, ever present, crafty, watchful enemies, who, however ignorant, know well how to make the most of the least disagreement of the teachers among themselves. The converts will also take sides, and with special eagerness will say, "I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas, and I of Christ."

The missions of the American Board are so organized that mutual consultation and comparing of notes come in as a regular part of their work. Members of the same station, when not away on tours, meet once a week and as often as special occasions may require.

An annual meeting brings all the different parts of the same mission field together for consultation and advice. All plans for enlargement are discussed and decided upon by vote, and the whole work is kept unified and harmonious to the utmost possible degree.

So essential is harmony in plan, organization, and teaching, that different evangelical sects have agreed not to enter each other's fields. The Ameri-

can Board does not send its missionaries into a field pre-occupied by Presbyterian, Episcopalian, Wesleyan, or Baptist missionaries. The field is the world, and wide enough to give to all the largest scope they can desire without any danger of contact.

This principle of government in the organization of missions has been confirmed by long experience. Nearly all mission "Boards" conform to it. About forty or forty-five years ago the Episcopal Board of Missions established a mission to the Armenians at Constantinople and elsewhere. The course of their missionary bishop, Southgate, was often in conflict with the missionaries of the American Board. A correspondence between Professor Greenleaf (Dane Professor of Law in Harvard College) and myself ensued, in consequence of which I translated for him very copious extracts from the standard books of the Armenian Church, presenting clearly its chief departures from gospel truth. He had two hundred copies printed for circulation among influential members of the church. It became so apparent that Bishop Southgate's apologetic work would always conflict with ours, that the mission, after thorough trial, was withdrawn. This non-interference comity of missions now governs evangelical missionary societies throughout the world. Occasional departures from it meet with the strongest condemnation of all good men of all denominations.

The most atrocious modern case of utter disregard of all comity and of all the decencies of Christian denominational intercourse, is the thrusting of certain Baptists into the work of the American Board among the Armenians in Turkey. The effort is fed and sustained by funds from this country, although, we are glad to say, the Baptist Board of Missions refuses to have any thing to do with it. It is an effort to thrust in the question of exclusive adult baptism among the evangelical Armenian churches. Such a movement, supported by money, will always attract a certain number of Adulmites who are skillful to do mischief, to stir up strife, to divert the mind and heart from true Christian work. We cannot but regard this as a foul blot upon the page of Baptist missions, too full of glorious triumphs over heathenism to tolerate such an atrocity upon Christian churches.

When different denominations are found in possession of a common field great prudence and Christian forbearance have been found necessary in order to avoid the evils and dangers of conflict. So far as possible they have divided their fields, and in every way have emphasized their points of union rather than of division.

But the case becomes entirely different when members of the same mission, under the same society, and working in the same field, have important differences in theological belief, and one teaches what his co-worker and associate refutes. It is impossible to avoid the excitement that follows. Each teacher will have his following. His partisans will carry things far beyond his wishes or intentions, and in most cases he will lose control of them. These fellow-laborers have gone forth to preach the gospel to the perishing. It is for this object that funds have been provided by Christian men and women. The prayers of the church have followed them, and they

themselves have hoped for a great reward in heaven. But their differences of belief lead them to difference of teaching. This is inevitable. Nothing but shameful dishonesty and hypocrisy could prevent it. Nor would that for a long time be successful. Thus the work begun in high and holy purpose is marred and ruined. It ends in strife, debate, and "evil surmisings," and better have never been begun. Two pernicious parties have been formed, and many lives made barren and wretched.

It is therefore one of the most solemn and responsible duties of those who, on behalf of the churches, select men for the missionary life, to choose those who can work harmoniously together. It is the most delicate and perplexing work a man can do. He must ask many questions which the candidate may think obtrusive. I knew an excellent, earnest young man so offended at the list of questions sent him that he turned away from the work in anger. I replied to his appeal to me that I had frankly answered the same questions, and if I had the responsibility of choosing a man for the same work, I should want him to answer them with the utmost frankness, and after that I should wish a personal interview and a free conversation. All this would not be a safe ground of choice without consulting teachers, classmates, and other friends. With all these precautions a mistaken choice is sometimes made, and the young man spends a year or two in the demonstration of his unfitness for the work, and returns with nothing to report but wasted time and money. We suppose that a certain percentage of such results is inevitable. It belongs to the imperfection of human instrumentality. All that human wisdom and caution can do must be done to reduce the number to a minimum.

Very honorable instances could be named in which the missionary, finding himself out of harmony with his associates on points of doctrine, has quietly retired from the work, because he could not suppress nor conceal his views, and he would not advance what he knew would displease his associates. Other cases of a very different character have occurred. How can two walk together except they be agreed? There is sufficient liberty of action, of following one's personal judgment, in the missionary work, but it must always be based upon that harmony of belief which shall give unity to the work all over the field.

What, now, would be the probable effect upon the missionary work should the secretaries disregard the antecedents of seventy-five years and send into the field missionaries of the New Theology?

The candidates might, and probably would, declare themselves in perfect harmony with the general preaching of the missionaries. They would preach the doctrines of repentance, of a new birth, and of salvation through faith in Christ. But they would not conceal, and could not if they would, their belief in a probation after death, in the fallibility of the Scriptures, in the supremacy of the ethical judgment in matters of faith, in the fallibility and ignorance of Christ with regard to the Old Testament, and many other peculiarities of the New Theology. Would this conduce to harmony in the missionary body itself? The *Andover Review* has brought forward two

missionaries who favor the New Theology. There are probably others. Have they avowed their beliefs and received the assurance of their brethren that they are in harmony with them? If any such event had taken place the *Andover Review* would not have failed to make it known. The Andover Theology has apparently made very little impression upon the missionaries of the American Board. It is simply imported German theology. It is the speculative spirit displacing the practical and spiritual religion in which our missions had their origin. It weakens the authority of the Bible, and even of the reported words of our Lord, and adjourns, in some cases, the make-up of man's character and destiny to another state of existence after death. I feel confident, from more than fifty years of personal acquaintance with missionaries of various fields of labor, that there is among them very little sympathy with this foreign product. How far the younger missionaries may be infected from Andover I cannot say, but the *Review* gives no evidence that the infection is extensive. The missionaries have given themselves to the preaching of the word of God without any exaltation of "the ethical judgment" or any wrong search for contradictions and inaccuracies in the Bible. And they have taken the Bible and translated it as being the word of God, and not as simply a rough shell containing the divine word somewhere, nobody can tell where—every man must hunt for himself. The missionaries do not believe in universal salvation. They believe that the "everlasting" and "eternal" of the Scriptures are terms of duration, and are to be taken in their obvious and natural meaning.

The missionaries believe in a probation confined to this life. The New Theology believes in a probation not confined to this life at all, and for by far the greater number hardly begun in this life. What is revealed of God in his works and providence and in man's moral nature is not sufficient to constitute a trial. God is under positive obligation to do something more for man. As the chances go against him in this world, God must give him a better chance in the other. And he must have "the historic Christ" clearly presented to him. What that probation is to be in the world to come, under what circumstances, is a matter of sheer conjecture, only it must be very favorable and inviting.

On such a momentous question as the fundamental nature of God's government over us, it would be fatal to all missionary success if the missionaries should have opposing views and one should pull down what the other builds up. This would be the inevitable result, to divide the mission force, to make it two instead of one. It would make those who should work in utmost harmony conscientious opposers of each other's course. They would feel impelled to leave off preaching to the heathen and would preach to each other. Each party, regarding these beliefs as vitally important, as involved in the right understanding of the so-called word of God, cannot, as honest men, but advocate them. To be silent would be treason to their high calling. It would allow the heathen to be deceived into a gospel which is not the true gospel. This transfer of theological controversy to the mission fields would neither fill the treasury nor inspire the church with hope of

coming victories. If any one can contemplate the inevitable results with satisfaction he can hardly be considered a wise friend of missions. The conflict must range over the whole area of theology,—the nature of the divine government; the limits, if any, of probation; the authority of the Holy Scriptures; the place and authority of Christian consciousness and of ethical judgment; the work of the Holy Spirit; conversion and regeneration; the final judgment; the awards to those on the right hand and to those on the left,—all these and kindred subjects must be considered and settled by the conversion of one party or the other before there can be any harmony of teaching. Mentally and spiritually the two parties stand at opposite poles and look up to different guiding stars.

The missionaries are earnest, practical men, reverent and constant students of the Bible, proclaiming its truths as of infinite importance to this present life, this one only time of probation, in which "he that believeth shall be saved and he that believeth not shall be damned." The Bible has objective authority to them. It decides all questions of faith and practice for them. They bow to it as of supreme authority, "and teach men so." Now a young man from Andover comes to them and tells them the Bible is full of errors, mistakes, contradictions; that our Lord himself is of no authority in what he says of the Old Testament; that the Bible, the true Bible, or, if you please, what is to you the word of God, is to be determined subjectively in your "Christian consciousness;" that the ethical judgment is supreme over the word, and is competent to decide what God ought to do and must do, whether found in the Bible or not. In support of all this and much more, he quotes a long list of German authors, men of profound learning, at least nominally Christian, to whose authority all men should at once bow without having the audacity to quote against them any of the sayings of Jesus of Nazareth or of his apostles and prophets.

There is, however, one passage in the Bible which gentlemen of the New Departure often quote as of supreme, even divine, authority. They will allow no criticism. In vain you point them to the assertion that Christ did not go to the spirits in prison in person, but by the quickening Spirit, which, according to Paul (Eph. i. 19, 20), was specifically the Holy Spirit, and that the preaching was in the days of Noah and only seven persons were converted and all the rest are now "spirits in prison." In vain you adduce high authority and the analogy of faith and the belief of the Protestant church. No consideration will be listened to with the least respect. It is their forlorn hope, and they will stand by it to the last.

Such being the position of the two parties, can there be any reasonable hope of a speedy reconciliation? We take them both to be equally conscientious, and determined, ready to make any sacrifices rather than even appear to yield an honest conviction. Is it wisdom to set them in array against each other, or to place them in circumstances where they cannot but contravene each other's work and influence?

The private views of missionaries would be of little comparative importance to the churches sending them forth and supporting them, but for the

effect of those views upon the peoples to be evangelized. Now it must be admitted that the New Theology verges towards a harmony, not only with the lapsed oriental churches, but with Moslems, Jews, and pagans. "All Asia" in some way or form believes in a continuance of man's probation without any definite time-limit like death. This is evident from the universal prevalence of prayers for the dead. The devout Mohammedans pray even for their Prophet—"Bestow thy mercy upon Mohammed and the race of Mohammed, as thou didst upon Abraham and the race of Abraham." This supplication is in the formal prayer which is to be repeated five times a day by every Moslem,—man, woman, and child; and as it is repeated three times at each prayer, and by the very devout nine times, the prophet and his descendants, living and dead, are very much prayed for. It is easy to see that about fifteen hundred millions of petitions are offered to Allah for them every day. The Moslems believe in a long trial after death and the judgment for Jews and Christians, but none will suffer eternal punishment except idolaters. The Moslem prayers for the dead are borrowed from the Jewish. The oriental Christians adopted, after the corruption of the faith, the unscriptural and heathenish notions of the Jews with regard to departed souls, and expanded them into a system. All believe in a state after death, not fixed and irrevocable, but admitting of alleviation and final deliverance. Prayers and offerings are as legitimate for the dead as for the living. It is true the New Theology does not tell us much about that trial, now going on beyond the gates of death, but it is assumed to be a very favorable one, much more so than the Moslems and Christians have supposed. There is all the more encouragement for prayer on their behalf. We pray for friends on a voyage round the world, although we may know nothing of their latitude, longitude, and weather, or whether they are moving by sail or steamboat or rail. If we believe, with Andover, that souls are still on trial after death, if we believe that Asia is right and that her millions on the other side are struggling up towards holiness and blessedness, then we ought to "exhort that first of all supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings, and for all that are in authority," *and also for unknown millions of souls still on trial.* Undoubtedly Andover prays for them in secret. But she has not yet the courage of her opinions to pray for them openly. This will come by and by.

Whether Germany absorbed this pure orientalism, and, straining out some of the more repulsive elements, transmitted it to the West, we cannot say. It will be hailed with delight on its return to the East with the sanction of the West.

But if this new theology be true, missions in Asia are a cruel impertinence. The Asiatics—Moslem, heathen, Christian—are doing very well as they are. They are passing on to have a "fair chance" to know the "historic Christ." It is positively wicked to intercept them with an offer under such unfavorable circumstances that very few accept it. The argument for missions fails. The "ethical judgment," prescribing what God ought to

do, has made the whole missionary work a pernicious waste which cannot too soon be abandoned.

But if the New Departure is resolved to have its neophytes tried as missionaries, then, in all decency and common sense, let not the two theologies be mixed up in one place. Do not mix them at all anywhere in mission work. The result must be disastrous.

Let the dissatisfied form a new mission, select a new field, and have the work all to themselves. There would then be perfect harmony. And if the proclamation of an unlimited probation, of a Bible suspiciously full of errors, of the inerrancy of the ethical judgment, and its authority to prescribe what God must do, should be followed by sinners being converted to God, the system would then gain that kind of credibility which success gives.

We would propose, as a most favorable field for such an experiment, some unoccupied territory of Africa. It offers more inviting fields than Asia. Africa was my first love. I fully intended to go there, but was suddenly sent off in another direction. Patient and fearless souls will find a grand work to do without interference with any one. The enterprise would have unity and simplicity. A single secretary with a good prudential committee could manage it for some years. The organization might be called "The Dissenters' Board of Missions for Congo." Those who should prefer it to the American Board could send, in their contributions accordingly. This measure would be attended with many advantages. It would offer a legitimate way for dissent to manifest itself, and to act without factious opposition to an existing institution. It would also open a door to all enthusiastic young men to go into Africa, and, "with a large-hearted and generous spirit," tell the heathen how happy have been their ancestors in knowing nothing of Christ, for their trial has been in far more favorable circumstances, and before this they are probably all in heaven. True, it is a misfortune to a heathen people to have the gospel presented to them in this life, but they must make the best of it. They must not think they are to enjoy their blessed heathenism any longer.

If, in response to this message, "Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God;" the church will reply with loud acclaim, "Sing unto God, ye kingdoms of the earth; O sing praises unto the Lord; Selah."

The New Departure desires nothing but peace and love. As to doctrines it desires to be let alone. Missions should be conducted in such a large-hearted and large-minded spirit that young men should be attracted to them by the grandeur of the aim without any scrutiny of their theological opinions,¹ etc., etc.

But, let me tell the New Departure, there will be a scrutiny into theological opinions which no missionary can avoid, which will be minute and

¹ There is a perpetual recurrence of certain phrases in the New Departure literature that is a little monotonous,—“large-minded,” “large-hearted,” “a free and generous spirit,” “grandeur of aim,” “a larger hope,” etc., etc., as though there had been no largeness of mind or heart, no generosity, no grandeur, no freedom of spirit, till the New Departure began to issue forth in print.

searching, sometimes in public, sometimes in private, with an open Bible and with sharp, irrepressible questioners, which will finally draw out your inmost thought; and your answers will be remembered and will perhaps be repeated to you decades of years afterwards, reminding you of time and place so minutely that your memory is brought forward to testify.

These critical examiners are the people to whom you preach the gospel. To escape it you must avoid giving them the Bible, or you must declare frankly that it is of no authority. At that sacrifice alone can you escape. When you have given them the word of God as of divine authority, as the infallible rule of faith and practice, you have put yourself into their hands for life. There will be no part of the Old or New Testament that you will not be asked to explain, or to declare your belief with regard to. If you have no belief, it will be noted and remembered. If you give or decline to give an opinion, it will be remembered. Your views will be compared with the views of your associates. There will be hardly a religious rite, ceremony, dogma, or proof-text of doctrine that you will not be examined upon. All facts of science and history will be mixed up in this perpetual encyclopaedic scrutiny. When I opened a Seminary at Bebek in 1840, a village never before occupied by a foreigner, one of the first callers was a Greek recluse with a difficult equation in algebra for solution. We could neither of us speak the other's language with fluency, but algebra was a clear and common language and cemented our acquaintance and friendship for life. Another, a beautiful youth, of eighteen, perhaps, came with a difficult question in chemical analysis, and we formed a friendship over that which still endures. One after another came with 1 Peter iii. 19, etc. It was for a time *the passage* of all others to discuss. The discussion generally resulted in the abandonment of their confident views. In the System of Christian Theology, by Henry B. Smith, page 605, there is a very brief statement in general harmony with the views of all the missionaries of our station, so far as I can recall them. Another came with a plan for a perpetual motion, and many others with questions of grave and spiritual import. Going to a neighboring city with an associate, we were called to a neighbor's house to meet him and his friends early in the morning before breakfast. A dozen or so were there, every one with a Bible in Armenian or Turkish, and for five mortal hours we answered as best we could their inquiries, ranging through the Old and New Testaments, involving prophecy, doctrines, morals, religious rites and ceremonies, arguments against the Jews, Moslems, Catholics, etc. Before an Andover missionary could thoroughly learn the language, the natives of the land, friends and foes, would have his measure, intellectually, theologically, socially. Hundreds of idle, curious souls have nothing else to do. A missionary who dissents from his associates with regard to the Bible, the divine government, human probation, the loss of the soul, inflicts a loss and ruin which cannot be measured. The proposal to ignore theological differences such as the New Departure has copied from Germany, involving the whole of theology, is a weak and foolish thing.

A little common sense and a slight knowledge of the actual working of

missions are sufficient to show the utter absurdity of trying to mix the New Departure with the Old Truth.

I return to Africa. Let the dissenters form a new society, and call it The Dissenting Board of Missions for Congo or for some other more definite field. They are charmed with grandeur : there is a grand opportunity for showing what stuff the New Theology is made of. If it be of gold, it will have honor and glory ; if it be of wood, hay, stubble, it will take fire by spontaneous combustion and burn up.

The dissenters seem to feel alarm for the fate of the old Board, if it pursue its present policy, as though the weight of Congregational sentiment and conviction were with them against the Board. Let them not be too much troubled. There are some who will still rally 'round the old flag. It has saintly and glorious memories, clustering around it, of sufferings patiently endured, of victories nobly won. If God be for it, who can be against it?