

was followed by a searching oral examination, which ended in a vote of approval, thirty-three to one. Dr. Smyth's statement concerning retribution we quote verbatim:—

*"The Future Life.*—The centre of the Biblical doctrine of the future life is Jesus' teaching concerning the final judgment. I believe that this present dispensation, or world-age, shall come to an end at the day of judgment. I believe that this world-age is the time of probation, and that any person born into this world shall have one fair and sufficient probation under conditions of grace. I believe that the end of probation is, for the present system as a whole, the day of judgment; and for the individual his confirmed self-determination in good or evil. I believe that the end of probation for the individual is not, and from the nature of moral freedom cannot be, any outward circumstance, temporal accident, or physical change, like the death of the body. I believe that now the conditions of eternal life are offered in the Gospel, and that whoever neglects or rejects them is in danger of the sin against the Holy Ghost, which Jesus said hath never forgiveness, either in this world or the world to come. I believe that if, incidentally in the development of God's purpose of grace under the limitations of a system of nature, sufficient conditions of gracious probation may not have been furnished in this work to any particular generation, class, or individual (as, for example, infants, idiots, antediluvians, some heathen, and children born apparently to no moral chance), I can trust God to provide for such some special opportunity for repentance in Hades before the final judgment. I cannot but think there is some scriptural warrant for this trust, in the fact that Jesus preached to a certain class of spirits in Hades. It also seems to me to be a logical deduction from the Biblical principle of individual accountability which has been maintained in our New England theology. While as a preacher of the Gospel I have no authority to offer to any man any time of salvation, but now I must allow that Jesus Christ, before He shall give up His mediatorial kingdom to the Father, may have opportunities, unrevealed to us, of offering himself graciously to any who may not have had a decisive probation in this life. Of what constitutes, in particular cases, a decisive pro-

bation under conditions of grace, we are not the judges, but God shall judge. I believe that the obligation of Christian missions rests upon the commandment of the Lord, and will be increasingly owned by the Church in proportion as it obtains higher views of love for the world; but so sacred a cause should not be bound up with extra-scriptural limitations of God's mercy. I believe that when the end of this world shall come, at the last great day, those things which are temporal shall be superseded by those things which are eternal. What this eternal order or kind of existence is, I have not now, under this present temporal form of life, power definitely to conceive. I regard such phrases as 'endless time,' 'everlasting duration,' as permissible expressions of the finality or permanence of the judgment, but not as proper depositions of the eternal, which transcends conception; and I accept Jesus' teaching of the possibility of eternal life or death in the moral positiveness and metaphysical indefiniteness in which he saw fit to leave for our use his doctrine of the future life. I do not accept the burdens, often too heavy to be borne, imposed upon this faith by the traditions of men who add to Jesus' simple gospel their vain earthly and temporal imaginations of the eternal life and its moral retributions. I cannot believe in annihilation, or the extinction from the sum of being of anything that has been made. How far moral personality may be self-vacated by persistent sin, and a soul killed, is one of those doubtful questions which I am content to wait for the day of revelations to answer. I cannot find either in Scripture or Christian reason sufficient authority to warrant teaching as a dogma the hope of a final reconciliation of all evil to the good will of God. I cannot deny the possibility inherent in moral freedom of eternal sin; and I think that Jesus leaves open, as a real danger to be feared, the possibility of a final rejection of the Holy Spirit. In full sympathy with the objects of evangelical preaching concerning the rewards and punishments of the future life, and in the endeavour to keep the solemn sanctions of eternity in the hearts and consciences of men, I would preach the positive, verifiable, moral elements of retribution, and be content with an humble indefiniteness and reserve concerning those portions of the Biblical doctrine of the last things, of which we can form at best only