

**THE CASE OF THE REV. WILLIAM
H. NOYES FOREIGN MISSIONARY
OF THE BERKELEY STREET
CHURCH BOSTON PP. 5-77**

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The Case of the Rev. William H. Noyes Foreign Missionary of the Berkeley street church Boston
pp. 5-77 by Hamilton Andrews Hill

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HAMILTON ANDREWS HILL

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Hill, Hamilton Andrews, 2d

THE CASE
OF THE
REV. WILLIAM H. NOYES
FOREIGN MISSIONARY
OF THE
BERKELEY STREET CHURCH
BOSTON

BOSTON
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GOD FORBID THAT WE SHOULD BARTER OUR THEOLOGICAL FREEDOM OR
OUR EVANGELISTIC ZEAL FOR DOGMATIC INTOLERANCE OR ECCLESIASTICAL
MANAGEMENT.

NOAH PORTER.

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THE CASE
OF THE
REV. WILLIAM H. NOYES

MR. WILLIAM HORACE NOYES graduated from Amherst College in 1884, and from Andover Theological Seminary in 1887. Born on missionary ground, and the child of missionary parents laboring under the direction of the American Board, he looked forward from early youth to engaging in the same service. While in the Seminary he offered himself as a candidate to the officers of the Board. This was in June, 1886. He was invited to the Missionary Rooms to meet the Secretaries, and after a long conference with them, the Home Secretary drew up what purported to be a statement of his theological belief and reported it to the Prudential Committee. Upon this statement, which Mr. Noyes had not seen, and which he promptly repudiated as soon as he was made acquainted with its terms, the Committee rejected him, or, in the language of its vote, decided that it was inexpedient to make the appointment at that time. Mr. Noyes then sent a communication to the Rooms, in which he reviewed the Home Secretary's report, and stated his position for himself. The Committee, however, declined to recede from the action it had taken, and again,

we will not say "refused," but "postponed" the appointment. Soon after this, the prosecution of five of the Andover Professors by two or three gentlemen, claiming to act for certain of the alumni, was instituted before the Board of Visitors.

In April, 1887, Mr. Noyes in conjunction with his classmate and friend Mr. Daniel Temple Torrey,¹ who also had offered himself as a candidate to the officers of the Board, and whose appointment, like his own, had been postponed, made another application to the Committee, explaining at length their theological views, and particularly their opinions in regard to the generations of heathen who have died without a knowledge of the gospel. A majority of the Committee had just decided in favor of allowing the Rev. Mr. Hume, a devoted and successful missionary, to return to India, his dismissal from the service of the Board having been seriously threatened, because, on a particular occasion, he spoke a few words not in accordance with Dr. Alden's dogma which would consign uncounted millions of the unenlightened heathen to everlasting damnation.² In the permission thus granted to Mr. Hume to return to his work in India, Mr. Noyes and Mr. Torrey thought they could see some disposi-

¹ Mr. Torrey was ordained June 4, 1888, by a representative Council of Congregational Churches, by a vote of thirty-eight to two. He was ordained acting pastor of the Harvard Church, Dorchester, with the understanding that he would enter the foreign missionary field as soon as the way should be opened for him.

² After this action in favor of Mr. Hume, it was determined to make the Prudential Committee even less accessible, for the purposes of appointment and reappointment, than it had been hitherto. Upon such questions, two out of the three Secretaries were to pass affirmatively, before the Committee could be reached. This rule, we believe, was changed at the Cleveland meeting of the Board. Moreover, a two-thirds vote in the Committee is now necessary to carry an appointment. Dr. Alden has long shown his distrust of the churches of his denomination, and of councils; he has come at length to distrust even his own Committee. The centralization of power in the Board, we should say, has been pushed almost if not absolutely to the extreme point.

tion on the part of the Committee to pay a certain respect to the wishes of the supporters of the Board, and hence their renewed application, which was as follows :

ANDOVER, MASS., April 13, 1887.

To the Prudential Committee of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions.

GENTLEMEN : — We both have applied to you for appointment as missionaries and have been deferred. We trust this decision is not final. We have had for many years a special interest in the work of foreign missions, and particularly in the work of the American Board. We are members of the Congregational body, and sons of missionaries of the Board. More than this, we believe that we are specially called by the Providence of God to enter personally into our Master's service as missionaries. Our call we conceive to be the recognition of the need of the heathen for the gospel, and the present want of missionaries, and our ability with Christ to meet and satisfy a part of this need and this want. The want of missionaries for India and Japan is urgent. Our growing apprehension of the necessity of the heathen will not allow us to give up our long-cherished purpose while there is hope that we may undertake its accomplishment. Hence we are compelled to return to you with our appeal that we may be sent as missionaries. So far as we are aware, there is no obstacle save an opinion concerning God's probable manner of saving men to whom the gospel has not here been preached. We cannot think that this ought to relieve us of the duty or exclude us from the privilege of bearing the glorious gospel of the blessed God to dying men. We cannot but hope in this trying experience that you do not fully understand us ; that you do not appreciate our great desire, our one determination, to "preach Christ and Him crucified" to men that are lost ; nor the proportion and emphasis of our doctrinal opinions. We ask leave, therefore, brethren and fathers, to state once more our position as sincerely and truthfully as we can, and not without dependence upon the help promised us from above.