

Presbyterian Review.

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THURSDAY, JULY 25, 1889.

REVISION OF THE CONFESSION.

AS our readers are aware the matter of the revision of the Confession of Faith has been sent down by the Northern General Assembly to the Presbyteries in the following terms:

(1) Do you desire a revision of the Confession of Faith?

(2) If so, in what respects and to what extent?

As might have been expected the remit has early engaged the attention of the Presbyteries. Amongst those which have already given an answer to the questions is the important Presbytery of New Brunswick which replies in the negative with no dissenting voice: "The Presbytery of New Brunswick, having carefully considered the overture in relation to the revision of the Confession of Faith, proposed by the General Assembly, respectfully replies as follows. This Presbytery does not desire any revision of the Confession of Faith."

Notwithstanding this unanimity in the Presbytery of New Brunswick, revision is much discussed in the religious press, notably in the *New York Evangelist*, and it is clear that the matter will not be settled elsewhere for some time to come. In order that our readers may be in possession of the chief arguments on both sides of what is now a burning question in American Presbyterian circles, we shall give some extracts from an able discussion between Professor De Witt, of McCormick Theological Seminary, and Dr. Henry Van Dyke, of Brooklyn, N.Y., as we find it in the pages of our contemporary. The controversy began with the challenge of Professor De Witt to those who would answer "Yea" to the overture, to give samples of the proposed new or revised statement. He said:—

It is possible that some of our ministers have, or suppose they have, formulas in their heads better than those in the Confession. Let us see the formulas. Let them be subjected to the criticism that can be offered only after they shall have been printed. Let no one be permitted to suppose that he is doing anything or "revising" by simply saying "The sections on Predestination should be amended," but compel him to write out a section which he is prepared to defend as better.

Professor De Witt's challenge was promptly taken up by Rev. Dr. Henry J. Van Dyke, who offers some "samples," the fruit of his "personal convictions after many years of study." Beginning with chapter iii. *Of God's Eternal Decree*, he finds in the third section a *supralapsarian* bias. He says:—

It may be construed to mean that men are foreordained, whether to life or death, simply as men, and not as fallen men; in other words, that God makes one on purpose to save him, and another on purpose to damn him. I would like to see that section amended, and brought into "correlation" with the teaching of the most orthodox theologians of our time, by inserting the words *for Christ*, so that it would read, "By the decree of God for the manifestation of His glory, some men and angels are predestinated unto everlasting life, and others foreordained for their "everlasting death." The fourth section I would like to see stricken out: because it states a mere theological inference not in any way necessary to the exposition of the doctrine, and especially because it goes beyond the statements of the Scripture on the subject. There is no appropriate proof text for it. The two that are quoted are wide of the mark. The declaration of Paul, "The Lord knoweth them that are His," (2 Tim. ii. 19), and the saying of Christ, "I know whom I have chosen," were not intended to show that the number of those predestinated whether to life or death "cannot be either increased or diminished," neither do they prove it, nor is it necessary to prove it. The seventh section of the same chapter contains another theological inference, which, however logical, is not necessary to a positive and complete statement of the Scripture truth. The word *eternation* or *reprobation* is not used in

our Confession, but the doctrine covered by these terms is taught in this section. Some of our ablest and most orthodox ministers openly reject it, and it is a stumbling block to many. But the mere striking out of this section would not satisfy Dr. Van Dyke. He would like to see its place supplied with something which many divines regard as a serious defect in the Confession taken as a whole: that it contains no explicit declaration of the infinite love of God, revealed in the fullness of the Gospel salvation as sufficient for, adapted to and freely offered to all men. He proposes, therefore, that the seventh section should read as follows:—

God's eternal decree hindereth no one from accepting Christ as He is freely offered to us in the Gospel; nor ought it to be construed as to contradict the declarations of Scripture, that Christ is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world, and that God is willing that any sinner perish, but that all should come to repentance.

Dr. Van Dyke contends that some such amendment would meet the objections of Arminians and all other opponents of the Calvinistic system and would be in perfect harmony with the whole Confession "adding logical force as well as divine beauty" to the concluding section of the chapter about handling the doctrine of this high mystery of predestination with special prudence and care, so that it may afford matter of praise to God and abundant consolation to all who obey the Gospel.

Nor do Dr. Van Dyke's proposed amendments stop here. For the well known phrase in the tenth chapter, "elect infants dying in infancy," in order to remove all doubt as to what the Church believes and teaches, he would substitute:

All infants dying in infancy are regenerated and saved by Christ through the Spirit, who worketh when and where and how He pleaseth. So also are all other elect persons who are incapable of being outwardly called by the ministry of the Word.

In support of the proposed change he urges:— We have fenced and fought and played football with the phrase long enough. If the Westminster Assembly adopted it as a compromise, let us no longer perpetuate its ambiguity. If it means that all dying infants are elect, let us say so in the Confession itself, in words that will leave no room for controversy. If it means that the whole subject is in doubt, and that for aught we know some dying infants may be lost, let us reject a doctrine which no Presbyterian minister holds, or would dare to preach if he did. I believe with Dr. Hodge, that all infants dying in infancy are baptized and unbaptized, born in Christian or in heathen lands, are elect and saved. (See Hodge's Theology, vol. 1, p. 29.) And therefore I am in favour of amending the Confession at this point by striking out the word *elect*, and substituting the word *all*.

In reply to the above proposals Dr. De Witt undertakes to show that Dr. Van Dyke's amendments will, if adopted, make the Confession of Faith a narrower or less liberal symbol than it is at present. He says:

But without going into the history of the sentence, ["Elect infants, etc.," Confession, chap. x, sec. 3] it is clear that it permits, as it was intended to permit, a presbyter to hold and to teach any one of the following opinions: First, all infants dying in infancy are saved; second, some infants dying in infancy are not saved; third, though it is impossible to be certain, yet there is a well grounded hope that all who die in infancy are saved; fourth, though certainly it is impossible, there are considerations that awaken the fear that God has not chosen to regenerate all infants dying in infancy. Thus the Westminster divines left the whole subject to individual opinion, and made places under the Confession—as our fathers, by adopting their work, made places in the Church—for men of widely differing views. Dr. Van Dyke now proposes to define as a doctrine what has hitherto been left to private opinion. He will permit no opinion except the opinion "All infants dying in infancy are saved." Henceforth should his proposal be adopted, doubt or hesitancy in respect to the future salvation of all infants dying in infancy, will have no more legal right in the breast of a Presbyterian minister, than doubt in respect either to the existence of a personal God or to the reality of the Atonement of Christ. Should a minister make so cautious and conservative a statement as that made by the late Prof. Henry B. Smith, "As to those who die in infancy, there is a well grounded hope that they are of the elect" [Christian Theology, p. 22] it would be competent for a presbyter to deal with him, just as it would deal with a minister who should say "As to a personal God, there is a well-grounded hope that He will be found to exist." I say, therefore, that Dr. Van Dyke's proposal on this subject is a proposal to narrow the Church, to make it less liberal than it is to day, by lifting out of the realm of opinion, and into the realm of officially defined dogma, a subject concerning which we are now at liberty to reach individual conclusions. Moreover, if Dr. Van Dyke should get his amendment passed, he would be in a better position as a religious teacher, so far as this subject is concerned, than he is now. He could not announce in the pulpit any more positively than he is now permitted to do, that "all who die in infancy are saved." The sum total of his gain would be the imposition on the whole Church, as a defined dogma, of what is now a private belief. The only result would be to make the theological platform of the Church less liberal than it now is.

As to Dr. Van Dyke's proposed amendment of the Chapter on the Decree of God, Dr. De Witt holds that it is open to the same objection as his proposal concerning the "infants dying in infancy":— The effect of his amendment would not be to make it easier for sub-lapsarian Calvinists to subscribe the declaration, for that is perfectly easy now. It would only be, if it had any effect of the kind, to make it more difficult for supralapsarians to subscribe it. At any rate, Dr. Van Dyke's avowed object is to get rid of supralapsarianism. Now I think it one of the glories of this Confession that it should be unwilling to drive out of the synagogue those who held either historical form of Calvinism.

And though I am no more a supralapsarian than Dr. Van Dyke is, I see, Gomar, Van Maastricht, and Twisse, the prolocutors of the Westminster Assembly, were, unless my memory is at fault, when they read the Institutes of Calvin, I am unable to find anything that shows clearly that he was not. Certainly I shall not vote for an amendment intended or calculated to make the platform of the Church too narrow for these men to stand on.

And he concludes:— The Westminster divines were an exceptionally wise body of men. The wisdom of the Assembly was far greater than the wisdom of its wisest member. I profoundly admire the learning and the wisdom its authors display, not only what they defined, but also, and I may say especially, in what they might have been expected to define, and yet refrained from defining. The result of their labours is that the Confession, when subscribed as we subscribe it in our Church, gives to a ministry the largest liberty possible within the limits of the Calvinistic or Reformed theology. My own impression is that we would better let it stand as it is. I say this, remembering that it is not impossible that an amendment may be proposed which will really improve it. I hazard nothing, however, as to setting that attempt to improve it, while keeping it Calvinistic, are usually attempts to narrow it by imposing passing individual opinions on the conscience of the whole Church.

In last week's *Evangelist* Dr. Van Dyke has a vigorous rejoinder to Dr. De Witt and stands up courageously for his proposed amendments:— Of the two remaining amendments, the first has for its avowed object, as Dr. De Witt correctly says, to get rid of the *supralapsarian* bias from section 3, chapter iii., by making it read that God foreordains men to everlasting death, not merely for His own glory, but also for their sins. Dr. De Witt does not deny that, as it now stands, it has a supralapsarian bias; but he defends and desires to retain the present form of the statement. He says that it is perfectly easy for our ministers here now to receive and adopt the Confession as it is, and intimates that I will not say to the contrary. But that is just what I do say. It is a stumbling block and an offence. It is designed to embrace both the supralapsarian and the sub-lapsarian form of Calvinism, it failed in its object; for it leans distinctly towards the theory that God foreordains men to eternal death simply as creatures, antecedent to and irrespective of their sins. For one, I do not believe this; neither do I subscribe to it. I receive and adopt the Confession as a whole, in spite of this statement. Ninety-nine hundredths of our Presbyterian ministers do the same.

If both these amendments were adopted, the supralapsarian and the doubter in regard to infant salvation, if such there are, would have no more difficulty in adopting the Confession. No one would be put out of the synagogue, while many would be encouraged to come in. And above all, the whole Church would have the immense public advantage of conforming her Confession to her faith. A dead law on the statute book impairs the authority of all law. A doctrinal statement in our Confession, which the mass of our ministers and people do not believe, opens the door for unbounded license in subscribing to our Standards.

From the above passages it will be seen that the controversy is not so much as to matters of faith as to the language in which the doctrines of the Church are conveyed. There does not appear to be, in the whole mass of correspondence upon this matter which has come under our notice, anything that indicates defection from Presbyterian Standards. It is easy, however, to discover a willingness to have certain passages so re-written as to give no offense to outsiders. The action, however, of the Presbytery of New Brunswick is most significant and probably indicates what will be the general action of the Presbyteries.

Upon this whole question of Revision the words of the *New York Observer* seem to us at this juncture to be exceedingly timely:— The construction of a Confession of Faith and its revision must proceed on one rule only. Every article must truthfully and explicitly represent the teaching of the Word of God. That teaching must be arrived at, not by a rationalistic interpretation; not with a sentimental desire to make it conform to human conceptions; not with the notion that it must be stated in terms adapted to the "spirit of the age," but by comparing "spiritual things with spiritual." The Word of God must be left to interpret itself. That Word is the final appeal, and before its tribunal must every article of a creed be substantiated or rejected. There is not a Presbyterian who is unwilling to have the Confession of Faith thus tried. If that rationalistic interpretation of the Holy Bible, which is largely chargeable with this call for revision, undertakes to determine the nature and extent of it, the consequences will be disastrous to both the faith and work of the Church.

EDITORIAL NOTES.

The peculiar performances of the Salvation Army in the neighbouring village of Eglinton, have been the occasion of unusual interest during the past week. Some members of the Army have been in the habit of going to that village and singing and praying in front of Oulcott's hotel, to the annoyance of the inmates. When the proprietor of the hotel, John Oulcott died a short time ago, some of the army assembled in front of the hotel and prayed that his wife and family would give up the liquor business, at the same time saying that Oulcott himself was in hell. On the evening of the 16th inst., when they assembled as usual, two of the members were captured by the police, and as they pleaded guilty to disturbance the men were fined \$5 each. Not being able to pay, they were sent to jail. Captain Warden, of the Army, was summoned last Friday, before Reeve Wilson, for creating a disturbance, but the magistrate decided to withdraw the case against him.

"I do this," said Mr. Wilson, "because I do not want it to be thought that I am trying to persecute the Army. I simply want them to keep quiet and leave other people alone. As long as they do not indulge in personalities, I have no objection to their form of worship. In fact I think they do a great deal of good in their way." But he subsequently intimated that he would not permit such unseemly disturbances as have taken place at Eglinton lately. Meantime the two members of the army sent to jail have been released, Mr. Wm. Gooderham paying the fine. It is but fair to the Army to state that the charge of insulting language made is denied. Whatever may be thought of the Salvationists and their methods it is to be feared that the settling of the law in motion against them in Ontario will encourage further acts of violence against their confederates in Quebec. Putting people in prison for worshipping as their consciences dictate is just as bad as putting them in prison for not worshipping as some other person's conscience dictates.

WHEN will people learn to be punctual and thus save themselves loss of time and perhaps loss of temper. The amount of preventible misery caused by the unbusiness-like habits of hundreds and hundreds that will not look ahead a little, is enormous. But, perhaps, matters are not in this respect quite as bad as they were in the days of the old stage coach or sailing-vessel when half an hour seemed to be of little account. We have changed all that—or nearly all that. Now every second counts. Not the least valuable educative influence of railways is the training of the travelling public to habits of punctuality. That public must be on time or be left behind. When the index hand of the infallible regulator points to the exact minute for starting as marked on the schedule, the man in brass buttons waves his hand, the wheels revolve and the train is off, no matter how many panting laggards run up the platform shouting, "Stop!" But that the railway has not completed its educative work may be seen from a casual visit any day to the Union Station. There you may see the "passengers aboard who have been left behind." Said a functionary last Saturday in commiserating half-a-dozen laggards that just missed the train: "Can't help it, gentlemen. You needn't shout, the train won't stop. If we waited for all that miss the trains we would never make a connection. Next train starts at 4.45 sharp." "A sharp lesson," you say; but are you quite sure you are always on time yourself and never cause another to be late through your neglect or loitering?

THE Hesperian correspondent of the *Gloucester Mercury* gives a picture of Sabbath desecration in the township of Puslinch, which we would hope is not applicable to other rural districts:— Time was when Sunday was observed in Puslinch in a strictly Presbyterian manner; but times have changed, and on Sabbath last people asked if Canada was annexed to the U. S. or had Chicago arrived here. All day Sunday, rigs passed through here to the lake, and on returning acted in a most disgusting manner, singing and shouting as they passed through a number of young men being so drunk that they were unable to walk, and on stopping in the village gave the impression that they got the liquor here, which is untrue. They come here drunk. Something should be done to stop this Sabbath desecration. Certainly something should be done by the local authorities to prevent the recurrence of such scenes as the *Mercury* correspondent deprecates. We would be very loth to believe that the change in Puslinch has come about through any declension in Presbyterian life and influence; but whatever be the cause, there is no question that the law of the land may be invoked to preserve decency and order.

We need not do more than direct attention to the report on our first page of the proceedings of the World's Sabbath School Convention, held in London, Eng., July 1-5. The report will be found deeply interesting and helpful to those of our readers concerned in the religious training of the young. It will be seen from the present instalment, as well as from what is to follow, that Canadian teachers took a prominent part in the proceedings.

Rev. JOHN MORTON and Mrs. Morton, of our Trinidad Mission, have arrived in this city and are at present the guests of Mrs. Shortreed, of 224 Jarvis street. The Church will be glad to learn that Mr. Morton's health is much improved since he left the Island. We notice from our New York exchanges that Mr. and Mrs. Morton were present and took part in the proceedings of the

International Missionary Union, held at Binghampton, N.Y., July 5th-11th. Of these friends the *Evangelist* in giving a report of the meetings says:

Nothing interested the Union more than the Rev. John Morton's vivid picturing, both by voice and good; of the Hindoo work in Trinidad, West Indies. Mrs. Morton proved herself the most vivacious speaker in the Convention. It was a surprise even to many missionaries to find Hindoos literally transported to that island on our own coast (South America), and to learn of the kindly provision made by the Government for the indentured Hindoos living there.

Literary Notices.

MESSRS. HOUGHTON, MIFFLIN & Co., have in press "The Life of Harriet Beecher Stowe, by her son, Rev. Chas. E. Stowe.

THE London *Christian* of July 5th has an excellent portrait and biographical sketch of Rev. Dr. T. L. Cuyler of Brooklyn, N. Y.

REV. D. MACDONALD of the New Hebrides has published through Sampson, Low, Marston and Co., an interesting volume entitled "Oceania. Linguistic and Anthropological."

MR. W. GARRETT HORDER, writing in *The Theological Monthly* (Nisbet & Co.) upon Church of England Hymnals, says: "I do not know of a single popular Church of England hymnal that, taken as a whole, could be described as poetic, or that any one would care to read for its intrinsic beauty."

THE *Christian Intelligencer* pronounces "Modern Science in Bible Lands" by Principal Sir J. William Dawson, McGill College, Montreal, to be "second in importance to no other book published during this year." The work is one of great worth and deserves the careful study of Biblical scholars and of all ready to receive a scientific confirmation of the facts of the Bible.

At the concluding exercises of the thirteenth academic year of the Johns Hopkins University, on Thursday, June 13th, the degree of Doctor of Philosophy was conferred on Archibald McMechan, A.B., University of Toronto, 1884. Subjects: "German, English, and Old Norse." Thesis: "The Relation of Hans Sachs to the Decameron." In September, Dr. McMechan will assume the Professor's chair at Dalhousie College, Halifax, to which he has been recently appointed.

"THE Love Dream of Gatty Fenning," by Sarah Doudney, is the new serial begun in the August *Quiver*, and it opens up most attractively. The Rev. P. B. Power takes the expression "They'll Cover up Some Ugly Place" as the text for a little essay. "Memorable Letters and their Writers" is the subject of a third paper by Rev. B. Shindler. "What Came of a Holiday" is a short tale, though it takes three chapters and one illustration to tell it. "The founding Hospital at Moscow" is described by E. W. Frith, and graphically illustrated. "When I Was a Girl," a short poem follows, and after it comes "Peter's Love and Boasting," by the Rev. J. Telford. An interview with Canon Barker, of the famous church of St. Marylebone, London, is a paper that everyone will read and enjoy. [Cassell & Company, New York.]

"THE value of an Egyptian Girl's Gold Necklace," is the title of an article by Rev. Dr. Charles S. Robinson, contributed to the forthcoming August number of *St. Nicholas*. In lecturing on Egypt recently, Dr. Robinson exhibited a necklace taken from a mummy, and to help the boys and girls who were present to realize what a great while ago thirty-six hundred years must be, he asked them to make this calculation: How much would the money which bought the gold chain, if it had been American money, put out at compound interest for thirty-six hundred years at six per cent., amount to to day, if the original price had been twenty dollars? The *St. Nicholas* article contains several answers to this problem, but it may be said that they are expressed in figures so great that they cannot be read. For convenience in reckoning, it may be assumed that the amount will double itself every twelve years.

THE leading article in the August *Missionary Review of the World* on "Islam and Christian Missions" is one of great interest and ability. It covers 17 pages. The writer's name is withheld for prudential reasons, say the editors, but he has long enjoyed the very best opportunities to study the system discussed in the light of its historical development and practical results. Rev. J. C. Braque has a paper of deep interest on "Evangelical Work in France." Dr. Pierson writes in his usual earnest and eloquent style on "The Attitude of the Papal Church towards Progress," and on "Spain the Land of the Papal Inquisition." Dr. Sherwood's reply to Dr. Cuyler, "Have we too Many Missionary Periodicals," furnishes food for serious thought on the part of churches, pastors, and missionary societies. The seven other departments as usual are full of intelligence and correspondence and brief papers and statistics from all parts of the world-field gathered, analyzed and arranged with care and skill. Two of the Editorial Notes we are sure will attract attention and remark: "President Harrison and Missions" and "The Fight with Jesuitism in Canada." [Funk & Wagnalls, New York.]

We have received from Mr. John Young, Toronto: *The Sliding Scale*, a ten cent booklet of 44 pages, detailing the steps by which the Christian Church of the New Testament and the first centuries became the Roman Catholic Church of to day, with a definition of each step. An instructive compendium for those who manifest any leanings Romanward. A tractate for the times. We have also received from the same house, *The Endless Chain*, an interesting 32 page illustrated Temperance tract, *Monie Molly*, an 8 page account of the conversion of an apple woman; *One of the Elect*, telling how one to whom the doctrine of Election was a stone of stumbling found rest and peace and assurance in Christ—30 pages, 3 cents; *Try Thanksgiving*—same size and price—a cure for care, weariness, and depression. *Moonlight*, an episode of Hindu life; *Nubri's Two Little Maids*, *The Pale's Story*, *Harp-punt and Radhabai*; *Rajahopal*; *Pitchers and Lamps* are interesting missionary tracts issued by the Free Church of Scotland Ladies' Missionary Society, which, as they relate to work for women in India, will be found helpful literature for Auxiliaries of our own Woman's Foreign Missionary Societies.

The current number (July) of *Knos College Monthly* contains as usual a number of papers of permanent interest. Rev. T. F. Fotheringham continues his scholarly sketch "George Buchanan—The Scottish Virgil." Dr. Burns of Halifax in "What an Anglican Bishop in the Maritime Provinces thinks of Presbyterians," presents to us a type of man whose ignorance is surpassed only by his intolerance. In "The Cereals, a Study in Apologetics," Mr. Harvey finds that "these plants (as we have and grow them) must have been specially given by God to man, but that man himself must have been directly taught of God as well the use and value of them to him as food, as also the way to grow them. Mr. Jas. S. Gale in "Among Koreans" gives a vivid picture of life in the Hermit Nation. Rev. Prof. Beattie, contributes some interesting notes of the Presbyterian Church in the Southern States. There is also a vigorous unsigned article, "Criticism of Missions," which should be read by the disciples of Mr. Caine's school. "Here and Away" is very lively. The editor is in fighting humour this month and will be sure to have some attention from Dalhousie and Queens' for his audacious thrusts at their learned heads.

THE WORLD'S SUNDAY SCHOOL CONVENTION.

(Continued from 1st page.) A LADY'S EXPERIENCE IN CHINA. Mrs. Stott held the close attention of the Convention whilst she told the story of her work amongst children and adults in China. It was difficult to know how to commence. She had laid what she thought an effective plan, commencing with the Garden of Eden, and tracing up the story of God's providence and love until it found its culmination in Calvary; but the people grew weary. One day, however, gathering a few about her, she told them of hell and heaven; "but," said she, "we will not talk about hell, for it's not worth talking about." And then she spoke of heaven with its freedom from pain, and suffering, and blindness, and want. One thing, however, she told them, must be done—sin must be put away. The question was asked—How is this to be done? Her heart thrilled at the enquiry, and she told the story of Christ, God's middleman. Since then she had always begun where she had formerly left off—at the Cross of Christ. Mrs. Stott closed by repeating the Lord's Prayer in Chinese, whilst the great audience bowed in sympathetic reverence.

BACK TO THE CONTINENT. Mr. Heybrock, of Amsterdam, gave a brief account of Sunday school work in Holland. Sunday schools were established a little over fifty years ago, and had made steady progress. In 1880 the schools numbered 1,000, and the scholars 700,000. Now there are 1,417 schools and 125,000 scholars. Mr. Greig supplied interesting details of the Sunday school effort put forth in connection with the McAll Mission in Paris; whilst a representative from Denmark told of 35,000 scholars and 2,000 teachers, being four times more than reported nine years ago.

THE WORK EXAMINED. This stage of the Conference was reached at the afternoon session yesterday, when the International Lessons were considered. Rev. Dr. Raudolph explained the history of the lesson scheme, and Dr. Monro Gibson defended it from certain criticism, saying that if brains could be published as well as lesson helps, there would be no difficulty. Mr. Benjamin Clarke and Dr. Peloubet gave details of how lesson help literature is prepared; and Mr. C. Waters read a paper on "Daily Bible Reading Organizations."

THE INTERNATIONAL BAZAAR. It was a happy thought that led the Committee of the Sunday School Union to link an "International" Bazaar with the World's Great Sunday school Convention. Whilst giving delegates an opportunity of extensive "shopping" with little trouble and to the advantage of the fund, it has afforded an effective demonstration of the strength of the Sunday school movement.

The opening proceedings at the Central Hall, Holborn, on Friday afternoon