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## Contributors and Correspondents

### GENERAL PRESBYTERIAN COUNCIL.

(From Our Own Correspondent.)

You will permit your correspondent now to give a brief outline of some of the subjects discussed before the Council.

The harmony of the confessions of the Reformed Churches, was the first subject discussed, and in view of the constant appeal of the Papacy to the divisions of Protestants in the exercise of the right of private judgment, a most important one.

Prof. Kraft, of Bonn, had drawn up a consensus in thirty-one articles from the varied catechisms, creeds and articles of the bodies represented. All the leading articles of our Evangelical Calvinism were there unmistakably and unanimously.

The variations found in the confessions are to be attributed to the necessarily, controversial character of the particular church which formulated. As Dr. Schaff, of New York, pointed out, the confessions of the Reformation Churches were largely apologetic. Surrounding adverse powers and heresies called forth their specialities, but their substantial agreement is remarkable and impressive. As a result of the discussion, a Committee has been appointed to collate the varied confessions, and the relation in which they stand in the matter of subscription to their several churches. In the present outcry against creed it is well to be reminded that the great battle of liberty, civil and religious, has been fought even to the victory around the old standards, and they deserve at least reverent treatment at our hands. Whether from their consensus a new and better formula can be obtained is a question we can better answer when the result of the committee's labour shall be known.

The subject of Presbyterianism in its relation to the wants of the day called forth no paper nor address of marked ability, the general tone of the discussion simply substantiated what every Presbyterian ought to know, that putting principles above rules, yet knowing mere abstraction to be practically valueless. Presbyterianism has liberty without license, and orthodoxy without forsaking old ways and long-tried paths.

The discussion on preaching and preachers called forth some interesting and instructive remarks. Dr. Crosby, of New York, opened up the subject by speaking of the preacher's aim, means, and manner. Whilst it is true that spiritual life civilizes, it is not true, as witness ancient Greece, that civilization gives spiritual life. The preacher is not a civilizer but a spiritualizer first; a preacher of Christ, not a social or political philosopher. The means were the Word of God and the Spirit's power. The manner, earnest, natural, solemn, the eccentricities of the pulpit were often wounds to the Lord in the house of his friends. Some churches were Sunday theatres whether loose-minded people looked, not for edification, but titillation. Our venerable father, Dr. Willis, put in a plea for Scriptural preaching and expressed an opinion that the doctrinal had not received all the attention it demanded in our churches. The address fully justified the expression of opinion by the council, that the simple full, and earnest preaching of the Word of God, is the great work of the Gospel preacher.

The subject of the Eldership did not elicit unanimity. Indeed for the present that subject seems hopelessly perplexing. That from the body of the laity there should be representatives associated with the ministry in the ruling and oversight of the Church was not only unquestioned, but maintained; but the exact ecclesiastical status of those officers was very differently presented. The evening of the day on which these subjects were presented was devoted to hearing of the Mission Work and field of the Presbyterian Church of the United States. Much interesting information was given which our Church in Canada could duplicate, and the peculiar aroma of the Fourth of July had not all been "wasted on the desert air" on this the evening of the fifth.

On the Saturday at noon a Communion service was held in Free St. Luke's, Dr. Moody Stuart's, at which many members of the Council were present; yet it was not held under the auspices of the Council, inasmuch as many held the principle that Communion ought only to be dispensed within the limits of ecclesiastical jurisdiction. It does appear strange that around the table of our common Lord the council as such could not meet. However, we shall all know each other better by and by, when at the table where the Master Himself shall preside, and our brethren in Him will be fully recognized.

"When a Church ceases to be missionary

her very existence is at stake" was the key note of one day's conference, and well will it be if that note be prolonged and find a response from every heart and in every corner of our vineyard. From actual experience it is demonstrated that the condition of the heathen world is not in advance of the sad days of old, unless it be into deeper darkness. Hindooism and Buddhism, of which in some quarters it is the fashion to speak so enthusiastically are worse in actual life now than in the days of Paul. The Church, as the only living leavening power, is as urgently called to spread abroad the name of Immanuel as when first the commission was given "Go ye into all the world."

Dr. Wangeman, of Berlin, gave some needed cautions as to the method of the missionary. It is more than questionable to seek to allure by gifts, which tend to demoralise, and prove a sorry foundation for a Christian Church. Nor must it be supposed that civilization necessarily prepares the way for the gospel. The civilization which follows, rather than that which precedes the gospel is more to be desired. When the gospel meets Caffre ladies in velvet and silk, and Caffre young gentlemen in tail coats, it must first contend with *civilised pride* and then with heathen custom and sins.

Dr. Moody Stuart pleaded for the million of Jews yet turned from Messiah, attaching a relatively high importance to their conversion, believing that they would be as a torch of fire among the sheaves of the nations of the earth.

Co-operation in missions was deemed, and justly, a matter of great import. Considering the urgent necessity of the heathen world, and the present scarcity of means, and above all the importance of presenting an undivided front to the heathen world, churches, whose creed and polity are essentially one, should not be found dividing the same field. Our national and domestic differences should never be continued in other and distant lands. So much was this felt, that a committee was appointed to collect information, and make practical suggestions, regarding the occupation of the foreign field. The working men of each of the Churches in that special department were placed on that Committee.

The meetings on the evenings of each day were designedly of the more popular character, and in the evening of the day when the above subject was presented, much valuable statistical information was given. Mr. Swanson, of Amoy, in speaking of mission work in China, gave strong expression to his convictions regarding the iniquity of the opium traffic, from which he said the British government pocketed annually about nine and a half millions of pounds sterling. How can public opinion be too strongly aroused upon this dark subject.

The vices of Christians have ever proved among intelligent heathen the greatest obstacles to the missionary work.

Nor was our own Church entirely ignored, ten minutes being given to Professor MacLaren, the respected Convener of our Western Foreign Mission Committee, to vindicate for our Canadian Church a place among the laborers in this interesting field.

By comparing notes of the different agencies a new impetus will be given to our foreign work, though the absence, through illness, of the venerable pioneer Dr. Duff, was felt by all. The living voice of one who has grown aged in the foreign field would have been an incentive to every heart.

### THE UNBELIEF OF THE PRESENT DAY.

Dr. Patton, of Chicago, the indefatigable champion of orthodoxy in the celebrated Swing case, and once a student of Old Knox's, opened the discussion with a paper of remarkable clearness and conciseness. He considered: I. Unbelief as it concerns the question of personal faith in Christ. The Gospel requires trust in a person, and in viewing the objection met in that requirement, we must not overlook the generic cause of unbelief, in the depraved nature which being *undesirous of the Gospel*, puts itself into an argumentative attitude, preventing acceptance even when intellectually convinced.

II. Unbelief as to the Divine authority of the Bible; which comes naturally after the state of mind already adverted to. Here a wise distinction was drawn between faith in the Bible, and faith in Christ. Saving faith is confidence in Christ, not belief in the authority of the Scriptures, though the two are very intimately related. Nevertheless, in considering unbelief, we should not confound them. A man may believe the Scriptures and not trust Christ, and a man may trust Christ who never saw the Scriptures. Thus we shall be kept from rashly misjudging that a man departing from a received view has lost faith in

Christ, and from putting ourselves in a false argumentative position; for if a man's Bible were reduced to the three synoptic gospels, it would still be his duty to believe in a risen Saviour, and to trust him for salvation. Moreover, man play the advocate rather than the judge, and are even deterred to give to error the benefit of the doubt. The duty of argument ceases when moral certainty has been reached. The man who says he will go to sea upon a raft because I cannot demonstrate to him that the Curador will carry him safely, must go on a raft.

III. Unbelief as regards misrepresentations of the Bible; which requires an understanding of what true progress in theology is, what are the inevitable tendencies of certain plausible errors, and a revival of dogmatic theology, based on true exegesis, giving rise to more thorough doctrinal preaching.

Dr. McCosh, of Princeton, gave a part of an elaborate paper upon the discoveries of science and speculations in Philosophy in their relation to religious thought. Theologians should remember that science has its methods, which lead to *certain* results, and awaiting these results need not fear truth in nature will contradict truth in revelation. These papers, with those of Dr. Watts of Belfast, and Dr. Thos. Smith of Edinburgh, will also make the forthcoming volume worthy of being read, and the remark of Professor Flint, that the Church should beware of causing unbelief by unchristian works and words, is worthy of being remembered.

In discussing the Helps and Hindrances of Spiritual Life, much stress was laid upon the Sabbath as a help, and Intemperance as a hindrance. The Sabbath was justly held as a boon conferred on man, suited to his wants, required by his life; whilst Intemperance was rightly held to be one of the most terrible sources of all that is evil and God-defying. A unanimous motion was carried in accord with the spirit of the addresses.

A more distinctive and popular Presbyterian literature was deemed desirable, and the power of the press was acknowledged. The duty, moreover, of office-bearers and members to encourage by support and sympathy such literature as presents the acts and writings and scholarship of the fathers and workers of the Church was insisted upon. The last subject formally before the Council for discussion was the Christian training of the young; the right of children to a place in the Church was insisted on, the utter secularizing of education protested against, and the necessity of home training and Christian influence felt to be of the highest importance.

The closing meeting on Tuesday evening, 11th July, was occupied with votes of thanks and closing addresses, which seem to be necessary adjuncts to all public gatherings. Many good, very good, things were spoken, some platitudes, and the usual mutual admiration. We are social beings, and sentiment has its softening and refining influence upon the hard workers and constant toilers.

The Scotsman, in a review of the Council, had some severe remarks about the sounding brass and orthodox clatter, but the Scotsman should remember that we must needs talk of subjects before united action can be taken, and information, with knowledge of each other, is the first step in a right direction: and even the superabundance of compliments into which men oftentimes fall has its kindlier side, whereby men are made kindlier, therefore better.

If the feelings stirred up within the Council are not allowed to expire outside the Council walls, the Church at large will have cause in after days to rise up and bless the gathering which has now closed within the Free Assembly Hall of the old city of Edinburgh.

For the Presbyterian.

### ORIGINAL SIN.

Than original sin, there is perhaps no doctrine concerning which, men, on the first interchange of opinion, are more inclined to differ; and none concerning which, proper explanations being furnished, they are more ready to agree.

That some doctrine of original sin is taught in the Scriptures, all will admit; that this is the doctrine as set forth in the Confession of Faith, many are not so sure.

In trying the correctness of a creed, it is a very good way for a man to bring the Word of God and common sense to bear on the doctrine in question, and then compare his conclusion and the creed together. Pursuing such a course with the doctrine of original sin, we cannot but observe the depravity of our own race as manifested in depraved wills, blinded minds, hardened hearts, and unmanifested affections. That such is not the picture of a few isolated homes only, or of some remote island, but

is the picture of the race as a whole, we but too well know. We are thus at once furnished with the doctrine of Universal Depravity.

The Scriptures have not left us to discuss whether our present unhappy state be the original condition of our race; or the consequence of a personal fall; or in consequence of the lapses of another. They teach that Adam stood, not for himself alone, as did each of the Angels, but that he acted for himself and for his posterity "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin." We are thus furnished with the doctrine of Federal Headship.

Now, it is evident, that inasmuch as we possess innate depravity, we possess it either as a calamity, or as a punishment. If it is only a calamity in the sense of a misfortune, it is not a sin. We are, however, to bear in mind that it is inconsistent with the government of an All-Wise, Moral Ruler, for moral calamities to happen, unless through the instrumentality of responsible agents; that while such acts may be viewed as very great calamities, they are nevertheless sins. Since our innate depravity is the consequence of Adam's fall, and is part of the punishment of his transgression, it is evident that we are in some way punished for Adam's sin. If punished for it, it must in some sense be ours. It is ours, not in the sense that it is our personal act, but ours on the principle of representation. "The union," says Turretin, "which is to serve as the ground of imputation may be threefold. 1. Natural, as between a father and his children. 2. Moral and Political, as between a king and his subjects. 3. Voluntary, as among friends, and between the guilty and his substitute." The bond between Adam and his posterity is twofold: "1. Natural, as he is the father and we are the children. 2. Political and Forensic, as he was the prince and representative head of the whole human race. The foundation, therefore, of imputation is not only the natural connection which exists between us and Adam, since in that case, all his sins might be imputed to us, but mainly the moral and federal, in virtue of which God entered into covenant with him as our head."

The doctrine of Original Sin, then so far as we have traced it, involves the following points: 1. Inherent depravity, manifesting itself in acts. 2. Want of original righteousness. 3. Federal headship of Adam. 4. Our being guilty of Adam's sin, which guiltiness is to be traced in, and through, the doctrine of representation. We need not say that these are the points involved in the doctrine of Original Sin, as taught in the Confession of Faith—"Our first parents being the root of all mankind, the guilt of this sin was imputed, and the same death in sin and corrupted nature conveyed to all their posterity, descending from them by ordinary generation. From this original corruption . . . do proceed all actual transgressions." Chap. vi. Sect. 8, 4.

The doctrine of Original Sin was one to which the Reformers attached much importance, believing as they did that a clear understanding of this doctrine furnished a key to many of the doctrines of grace, in their relation both to God and to man. Between Zwingle and Luther some differences unfortunately existed which kept each in his own field of labor; yet when they met, if possible to compose their differences, at Marpurg, they found themselves at one on fourteen essential articles of faith, and the doctrine of Original Sin was one. "We believe," runs the article, "that Original Sin is innate in us, and was propagated in us from Adam, and it is such a sin that it exposes all men to condemnation so that unless Jesus Christ had interposed for us by his death and life, all men on account of original sin would have been condemned, nor could they have come into the Kingdom of God, and eternal happiness." This is not only the views of these reformers and their friends, but is substantially the doctrine of Original Sin as expressed in the Helvetic, Bohemian, Belgic, Saxon, French, English, and Scotch Confessions.

Notwithstanding this unanimity in the Reformed Church on this doctrine, there have not been wanting men who have differed very widely from the received view; yet it is worthy of note, that though in the Romish Church, there are errors on this, as on other points, yet many of the leading Theologians of that communion have held sound and just views of this doctrine. The Pelagian heresy in the fifth century so vigorously assailed by the Bishop of Hippo, led to do so through an examination of this doctrine by the church, that, in certain quarters at least, the Church of Rome was never heretical on this point. Of this we have the best evidence in the fact that the Council of Trent did not consider it safe to condemn the views held by the Reformers on original sin, because many of the mem-

bers of the Council held the same views, which were substantially those of Augustine, and which the Church of Rome adopted, by her acceptance of all the writings of this father. While many of the writers of the Romish Church, in treating of original sin, grant the imputation of Adam's sin and the want of original righteousness, but say little or nothing of moral depravity, others as the Jansenists maintain, with Augustine, an entire and positive corruption and depravity. Cardinal Bellarmine would on this subject satisfy the most conscientious Calvinist.

Arminius teaches that "*Original Sin*" is rather a punishment than a sin, and that it will condemn no man. Speaking of the Covenant of works, he says, "By the disobedience of our first parents all men who were to be propagated from them in a natural way became obnoxious to death temporal and death eternal, and devoid of the gift of the Holy Spirit or original righteousness. This punishment usually receives the appellation of "*a privation of the image of God*," and "*Original Sin*." "Must," he asks, "some contrary quality beside the absence of original righteousness be constituted as another part of original sin," Vol. ii. p. 79. From such a denial of man's total depravity, it becomes a leading feature in Arminian Theology that man can, in the exercise of his free will, do something more or less that is spiritually good, something that will contribute to effect his deliverance from the guilt and power of sin. That such a view is akin to those held by the Pelagian faction of the Romish Church is evident from the fact that Albert Pighius one of the prominent writers of that communion, after the conference which was held at Worme, expressed his opinion in writing as follows:—"Original Sin does not consist in any defect, nor in any vice, nor deprivation of nature; not in any corrupt quality, nor inherent vicious habit in us, but solely in our subjection to the punishment of the first sin." He farther teaches that "*Infants*, incapable of obedience cannot be the subjects of sin." A view contrary to this was held by Placeaux, professor of the French Protestant School at Saumur. He rejected the doctrine of imputation, and taught that original sin consisted solely in the inherent depravity of man. His writings were condemned by a National Synod, A. D. 1644.

The Calvinistic doctrine of original sin, which according to our opinion, is the only consistent and satisfactory exposition of the doctrine that can be given is well presented by Principal Cunningham—"Adam was constituted by God the representative and the federal head of his posterity, so that his trial was virtually and in God's estimation, according to the wise and just constitution or arrangement which He had made—and which certainly, to say the least, cannot be proved to be unjust or unfavourable to his posterity—the trial or probation of the human race; and that the transgression of Adam became, in a legal and judicial sense, and without any injustice to them, *theirs*, so that they were justly involved in its proper consequences. If it be indeed the actual fact, that men came into the world with ungodly and depraved natures, which certainly and invariably, until they are changed, produce transgressions, then, assuredly, the principle that Adam was constituted, and thereafter was held and regarded by God, as the representative and federal head of his posterity, so that they sinned with and fell with him in his first transgression, is the only one which has ever been propounded which makes even an approach towards affording an explanation of this important fact, viz., that men do come into the world with their whole moral nature corrupted and thoroughly perverted, so far as God and his law are concerned."

It is a question liable to be discussed,—viz., whether in accordance with the Calvinistic view, it is necessary to believe that men will be finally condemned for their original sin. We would answer, Calvinism is no more responsible for all the silly questions that may be asked in its name, than is the Word of God for all the absurd creeds that profess to be drawn from its pages. Calvinistic ministers have ever taught the doctrine which the Lord Jesus Christ taught, on this subject. "For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father, with his angels, and then shall he reward every man according to his works," Matt. xvi. 27. We need not say that this is the doctrine of the confession of faith. "In that day not only the apostate angels shall be judged, but likewise all persons that have lived upon this earth shall appear before the tribunal of Christ, to give an account of their thoughts, words, and deeds, and to receive according to what they have done in the body, whether good (Continued on eighth page.)