

congregations. Presbyteries this year will have an opportunity of showing how much better they can do the work, hitherto mainly done by the convener. We have no doubt reason to be thankful for even the small amount of attention given to this subject in our Church courts. Progress has been made in reference to the consideration given to it; but we are still far behind what duty demands, in regard to the place given in our Church courts, to dealing with the religious life of our people.

We neglect this on which all the work of the Church depends, on which our missions, and colleges, and the comfort and happiness of the pastorate depend. We treat it as if it were a subject of secondary importance. I believe, however, that this arises very largely, rather from the stupidity which characterizes our methods of procedure, than from any want of sympathy on the part of the Church with this important question.

Barrie, July, 1884

D. D. McLEOD.

THE PAN-PRESBYTERIAN COUNCIL.

At the meeting of the Council on the second day the Rev. Dr. Hayes presided. After devotional exercises and routine business it was agreed to take up the question of

THE CONSENSUS

Principal Cairns, Edinburgh, presented the report of the committee on the consensus. While desiring the embodiment of a symbol for the Alliance, it was recommended that it should not be adopted at present.

Principal Caven, Toronto, then moved: "That the Council, without committing itself to all the reasons by which the committee reaches its conclusions, adopts them, but considers it inexpedient at present to attempt a definition of their doctrines or a consensus of the Reformed Churches." He was in sympathy with the conclusions to which the report came, but he thought it had been shown it was not expedient to attempt a definition of their doctrines in a consensus. After discussion, Principal Caven's motion, with verbal alterations, was adopted.

Principal Calderwood submitted the following motion: "That the Council declares that it does not desire to have a consensus of the Reformed creeds either for the purpose of affording a test for the admission of Churches into this General Presbyterian Alliance, and for framing a creed for the Alliance, but the Council agrees to declare its conviction that a formal statement of a consensus of the Reformed creeds would render great service to the cause of Christian truth, and would tend to unite under still closer relations all the Reformed Churches organized under the Presbyterian order."

Drs. Schaff, Bomberger, and Storey discussed the question, when Professor Calderwood's motion was rejected by a large majority.

THE AUTHORITY OF SCRIPTURE.

The Rev. Professor Charteris, Edinburgh, read a paper on "The Authority of Holy Scripture in the Early Christian Church." The following are the principle points made: That the apostles claimed for themselves, both as speakers and hearers, a paramount authority in the early Church, and that no writings obtained a place in the sacred canon of New Testament Scripture unless, and until their apostolic origin, was believed to be indisputable. In regard to the New Testament itself, we find, as a whole, that it claims to be a direct revelation from God. Its authors claimed for themselves the position of speaking the word of God. St. Paul says: "What things we speak not in words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth, comparing spiritual things with spiritual." It is one of the numerous errors fallen into by the learned authors of "Supernatural Religion" I, p. 2, when they state that there has scarcely been any system of religion in the world proclaimed otherwise than as a direct Divine communication. To this the only reply is a direct negative. There never was any system in the world which, so far as we can ascertain from its sacred books, claimed to be a direct revelation from God as our Bible does. The men who wrote the Vedic hymns, the noble creed of the Avesta, or the legends of Buddha, or some of the Chinese Scriptures do not say—"Hear ye the Word of the Lord." It seems the author of "Supernatural Religion" is quoting from Max Muller, and he is not the only author who has been misled by that gifted scholar's ambiguous words. Max Muller says: "According to the orthodox views of the Indian theologians, not a single line of the Vedas was the act of

human authors. The whole Veda is somehow or other the work of the Deity, and even those who received it were not supposed to be ordinary mortals, but beings raised above the level of common humanity, and less liable, therefore, to error in the reception of revealed truth." There are many such paragraphs in Max Muller's writings, and we may with good reason complain of their ambiguity. "According to the orthodox views of Indian theologians" are his words. He is too learned and too wise to say: "According to the views of the author of the Veda;" but he ought to have made it clear here and elsewhere that what he says of a claim for Divine revelation in the Vedic hymns is true only of the ages of subsequent theology, and is not true of the primeval authors themselves. The paper then states that the apostles had had a fullness of the Holy Spirit's influence, enabling them to write the New Testament. Apostolic Scripture is the basis and foundation of the Church. No Council ever settled its canon, no Imperial edict ever promulgated it; the stories of what befell at the Nicene Council are idle tales, and we believe them not, for the authority of New Testament Scripture was a living growth, silent, fruitful—fanned by the breath and strengthened by the dews of God's Spirit, and expanding in the warm light of God's love. *Sit perpetua.*

Dr. A. A. Hodge, Princeton, then read a paper on "The Authority of the Holy Scripture as Taught in the Confessions of the Reformed Churches." The following are its principal points: The ultimate authority in which all moral obligation blinding the will of man originated is the will of God, however revealed. All other grounds and sources of moral obligation rest ultimately upon this Divine will, and the most direct, explicit, and certain expression of that will must overrule all other presumptive indications of duty whatever. The Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are declared by the Reformed Confessions to be the very Word of God to men objectively presented in human language to determine "what man is to believe concerning God, and what duty God requires of man." In both respects above distinguished the authority of these sacred Scriptures is ultimate and absolute. This absolute authority must be conceded by all Theists to the actual Word of God, however uttered and ascertained. The identification of the Word of God with the canonical Scriptures, both matter and form, is an essential doctrine of the Reform Churches. All the contents of the Scriptures are not of the same dignity or value or interest to us. Some of the contents are incomparably subordinate and incidental to the rest. Nevertheless God's Word is one, and of Divine, and therefore of equal, authority in all its parts, great and small; and the authority alike in all it affirms and in all it commands is due precisely to the fact common to every part of Scripture, that God is speaking, and to us. No matter how the assurance is generated, the ultimate authority of the Scriptures rests on this ground. It is also the doctrine of the Reformed Church that Scripture, being the only Word of God, is its own interpreter and judge of controversies, that no ecclesiastical tradition nor council, that no orthodox doctors nor critical scholars possessed of special insight or scholarship have any authority from the canon, or to interpret the sacred text so as to bind the faith of others. The Word of God is addressed to all men, and all are bound to appeal to it directly from all human authorities on all questions relating to religious faith or practice. The Reformed Confessions, as a class, with the fewest exceptions, begin their list of doctrines by affirming the infallibility and Divine authority of the Scriptures in their opening chapters. The Confessions quoted were still in force, unmodified and unrepealed, and the vast majority of the members and office-bearers in all their Churches remain from their hearts most cheerfully and entirely loyal to their historical standards. The harmony of the Reformed Confessions establishes the article of faith that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the Word of God. The same article is the common faith of this Alliance.

DEPUTATION FROM THE WESLEYAN CONFERENCE.

Rev. Dr. Johnston introduced as a deputation to the Council on a friendly visit the following gentlemen:—Rev. Charles Garrett, ex-President Wesleyan Conference; Dr. Cook, vice-President; Dr. McKay, President Methodist College, Belfast, and others.

The Rev. Dr. Crook read a congratulatory and friendly address to the Alliance from the Wesleyan

Conference then in session in Belfast. Drs. Garrett and McKay addressed the Council, when the President acknowledged the courtesy and reciprocated the Christian salutations of the deputies.

The Rev. Talbot W. Chambers, D.D., New York, then read a paper on "Biblical Criticism Its Proper Functions." The first function of criticism is to ascertain what is the Bible—that is, of what writings it is composed. We are not now to inquire whether the Scriptures are true or not, but whether there is satisfactory evidence that they were acknowledged as the Divine Word, by those who first received them. Here resort must be had to contemporary records of all kinds, the early versions, the writings of apologists, and others, the usages of the Christian communities, the attacks of heathen opposers, and even the objections of heretics. Here is a fair subject for criticism, that is for a minute and patient inquiry. No true believer is afraid of investigation. Our faith, we maintain, does not rest either on ignorance or on prejudice, but on truth. We cordially welcome every writing or inscription, every memorial of whatever kind exhumed from the primitive ages, and ask only that it shall be carefully examined and its evidence fairly weighed. Having ascertained the canon or of what writings the Bible is composed, criticism has the further function of settling the text of these writings—i.e. of coming as nearly as possible to the *ipsissima verba* of the sacred writings both in the Old Testament and the New. Textual criticism has already accomplished a great work for the Christian Church. It has accumulated a vast store of materials. It has exhumed and classified manuscripts and studied and collated all the ancient versions in whatever tongue. The paper referred to the misapplication of the term "higher criticism." Then it referred to the legitimate sphere of criticism and the spirit in which it should be pursued.

This paper was followed by another on the same subject by Professors Lucien Gautier, Ph.D., Lausanne, who claimed that for theological students a knowledge of Biblical criticism was absolutely necessary. In his view, however, it must hold an interior place, because the subjects with which it dealt were changed, and its place among the theological sciences was a secondary one.

EVOLUTION.

Rev. George Matheson, D.D., who is blind, gave an address on "The Religious Bearings of the Doctrine of Evolution." He traced the theory of Evolution to its earliest form in the controversies between the Creationists and the Traducianists, who sought to reduce all human lives to the unity of a single life, while the modern Evolutionist seeks to reduce all individual objects to the unity of a single form. We are in the presence of matter and force. Force may be defined as that which by motion has power to change the state of any body, and Mr. Herbert Spencer does not hesitate to affirm that we do not know what moves, but at the opening of the first chapter of Genesis the divine agency in the work of creation is described as the agency of a force—"the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." According to the Evolutionist there is no break in material nature, but when Mr. Herbert Spencer speaks of 'an inscrutable force lying at the basis of all things, what does he mean? Why, every stage in the evolution of the world encloses an unfathomable mystery. The giving of an immortal life to man does not in the system of the Christian theist involve any addition to the sum of the universe, and not from a newly-created force, but from a principle of immortality already existing. "God breathed into man's nostrils the breath of life, and he became a living soul."

The Rev. Thomas Barty, Kirkcolum, Scotland, occupied the chair at the evening meeting.

Professor Blaikie gave as the opening address a survey of the Presbyterian Church, its training and work.

Dr. Junkin read a paper on "The Substantial Unity of the Reformed Churches," and the sympathy for each other which should pervade them. He stated that the Reformed churches, though scattered the world over, divided into many distinct organizations, with their 20,000 congregations, their 18,000 ministers, their nearly 3,000,000 members and their 25,000,000 adherents, are yet one in their scriptural doctrines, one in their apostolic order, one in their loyalty to infallible truth and absolute supremacy of the Bible. This substantial unity dates from the Reformation.

He was followed by Professor Morris, D.D., of Lane