

CONFERENCE OF THE AMERICAN BRANCH OF THE EVANGELICAL UNION.

SESSION FIRST.

Conference met in Zion chapel, Guelph, July 1st. After being opened with praise and prayer led by the Rev. Thomas Pullar of Hamilton, the following address on the important question, DID EVIL ORIGINATE WITH THE INFINITE, OR WITH THE FINITE? was delivered by the retiring President, the Rev. Henry Melville, Toronto.

BELOVED BRETHREN, AND CHRISTIAN FRIENDS,—In opening this meeting of Conference, an address is expected from the President; and as you have conferred upon me the honour of occupying that prominent position throughout the first two years of our existence as a Branch of the E. U., I embrace this opportunity of expressing my heartfelt gratitude for your kindness in conferring this mark of respect. Before, however, retiring from the office which I have occupied from the commencement of our infant Conference, and before giving place to another better fitted to discharge its duties, I wish to express a few thoughts on a very interesting and important question.

The question to which we refer is the following:—*Did Evil Originate with the Infinite, or with the Finite?\**

Some of the ancient philosophers, indeed many of them, both theistical and atheistical, believed that there were two supreme, co-eternal, and independent causes, acting in opposition to each other. They conceived one of these uncaused principles to be the author of all good, and the other to be the author of all evil.

They could not see, on the one hand, how the *good* that existed could possibly have its origin with an *evil principle*; and, on the other hand, they could not see how the *evil* that existed, could have its origin with a *good principle*. It seems never to have en-

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\* We are persuaded that a correct and scriptural answer to this question will go far to show that those grand principles and distinctive doctrines for which we contend, and which we are neither ashamed nor afraid to defend, are in harmony with truth, and make luminous the loving, and lovely character of God,—that God who is light, and in whom there is no darkness at all. Our object in taking up such a subject as this arises more from our love of truth, than from our love of controversy, and we trust that the brethren will not deem it out of place on the present occasion. Every intelligent person is aware that the origin of moral evil is a subject about which a great deal has been said and written. Thinkers of every country and of all past ages in the history of our world, have turned their attention to this profound, and to millions most perplexing question.