

THE OXFORD AND BRIGHTON CONFERENCES.

The Autumnal meeting of the English Congregational Union, recently held in London, was signalized by a most important and interesting discussion on the teaching of Mr. Pearsall Smith, and the Oxford and Brighton Conferences, on the subject of holiness. Two papers were prepared at the request of the Committee—one by the Rev. G. W. Robinson, of Brighton, in defence of the Conference; and another by the Rev. W. Kingsland, of Bradford, not indeed in opposition to Mr. Smith's views, but yet a *critical* paper in regard to them. We have read them with very great interest, as well as the addresses by which they were followed, and should like to present them in full to our readers; but that being impossible, we shall endeavour to *boil down* what the writers have evidently boiled down before, so as to give the substance of the discussion.

Mr. Robinson first cleared the way by showing what was *not* the teaching of the school referred to, though they were often falsely charged with it. Men are taught, it has been said, "that sanctification consists in folding the arms and leaving the Holy Spirit to act; that watching and prayer are no longer needful; that there are no more difficulties, or struggles, or sorrows in the life of the true Christian; that there is no further room for progress; that we are sanctified the moment we imagine ourselves to be sanctified; that there is no more need of pardon, or of the daily efficacy of the blood of Christ; that there is no longer any danger, or even any possibility of sinning." What they do hold, he said, was "the duty of yielding the whole being unreservedly to God; of presenting the body a living sacrifice to Him. It was shown to be impossible that God should dwell in a heart where one lingering idol or rebellion is consciously retained. And this great act of surrender was declared as a present and possible duty. Seen in the light of God's holy law, no man has in him the power to sanctify or separate himself perfectly to God; but each man has at the present moment a power, which, being the utmost power he can exercise, is the power for which he stands accountable. And each one *can* at the present moment exercise this will-power, be it more or less, and present himself a living sacrifice. And having thus yielded himself as well as he is able, he is then, in relation to his own will and purpose, altogether the Lord's. To-morrow, with an increased light and power, he may make a completer offering; and the next day an offering still more complete.

The next thing insisted on is "Trust." Not only must his sins be abandoned, but his unbelief must be abandoned. He must trust. And trust means this—he must now believe that God has become God to him according to His promise and His nature. He has come out from evil, and made himself separate, and now God is to be his Father, and he is to be a son of the Lord Almighty. "All this is summed up in the promise of the Holy Ghost. And the man who yields himself to God has at the instant of yielding not only the right, but the duty of believing that the Holy Ghost is given to him in that fuller operation, which only becomes possible when the will is quite surrendered. He is to believe that the offering of himself, which he by his own strength cannot sustain for an hour, is accepted of God, and that God will keep it by His own almighty power. He is to trust, and this independently of feeling and consciousness, that God has begun to live in him, and walk in him; that henceforth he has only, with child-like simplicity, to yield himself to be led by the Spirit of God."

This complete surrender, he said, usually has taken place at some period subsequent to conversion, and has sometimes been called a "second conversion;" but he thought it might take place whenever such a fuller revelation of the resources of the Gospel is made to the repentant sinner, as will enable him to trust for forgiveness, for providential care, and for the indwelling of the Holy Ghost.

Does this, then, he asks, supersede the necessity of growth in grace? "Is there no room for advance beyond? Nay, the man has simply taken the true attitude for sanctification. Progressive sanctification lies before. The distinction is here.