

Contributors and Correspondents

For the Presbyterian.

A SUNDAY IN AN AMERICAN CITY.

Detroit, Michigan, is a large and thriving city, located on the edge of a beautiful river. The city stretches about four miles along the river and covers an area of about thirteen square miles. The population is about 120,000, and includes almost every nationality. There are some sixty churches, eight of these being Presbyterian, the pulpits of which are filled by able men; some of whom are well-known in the Canadian Church, others again having a much wider and more extensive reputation.

Fort Street Presbyterian Church, of which the Rev. Dr. Pierson is pastor, is one of the finest church edifices in the city. About two years ago the old church was burned down, and since then the present building has been erected and has been only recently opened for public worship. The church is not only ornamental in its external appearance, but is most elaborately finished inside. The pews are of carved walnut and of a circular shape; the walls and ceilings are beautifully frescoed, the whole presenting a most exquisite appearance. The church will seat about 1,200 and it cost about \$100,000, and is I understand free of debt.

At half-past ten o'clock Dr. Pierson entered the pulpit, and after the introductory exercises announced as his text John xviii. 37—"To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth." The preacher in his introductory remarks noticed that "destiny" exercised a great influence in the development of human character—even that of a blind fate had an influence in moulding character; and illustrated this point by referring to such names as Alexander, Cæsar, and Napoleon. In the text Christ declares His destiny or purpose to be that He came to bear witness to the truth—He had a special mission and purpose to accomplish. Christianity does not leave us to fate, this point was clearly illustrated by references to George Washington and John Wesley, who had a destiny and purpose to fill; and so Christ had a special purpose or destiny to fulfil. He came to dispel falsehood, idolatry, error, and every other form of corrupt religion. The preacher here stated that it was his intention to use the text and these observations as a means of encouragement and instruction to the congregation to which they were being addressed, and proceeded to say that in following up the idea of destiny, he showed first "that there is a divine plan in every human life," and drew a vivid picture of the adaptation of man to the various spheres in which he is intended to move, and appropriately illustrated this idea by a set of machinery, each piece of which answered to the purpose for which it was intended. He then proceeded to show that God never made two men exactly alike, that whilst there might be a seeming likeness, yet on close examination they would be seen to be very different; God never repeats Himself, He never even made two violets under the microscope exactly alike, and never made a man or woman that He had not a separate and distinct purpose for them to fill, and referred here to the case of Pharaoh that he was raised up for a special purpose, and it is as true of every true child of God as it was of Christ that he has a special destiny. The preacher here drew a graphic picture of the distinguishing characteristics of the apostles themselves, and showed that each one had separate and distinctive features of character. 2nd. How shall man find out his particular sphere? Under this head the preacher showed that men generally run into two extremes—they either overrate themselves and attempt too much, or underrate themselves and screen themselves in a corner when they would be very useful in the kingdom. The preacher counselled his hearers to study carefully themselves, or first, to know themselves; and second, to know the wants of society. These wants are not always the same—the wants of the present generation are very different from the wants of the past generation. Some ministers think that when they change from field to field or from one pastorate to another, that the sermons which suited a former charge will be suitable to their present. In this they make a serious mistake, and if they wished to bury themselves effectively out of view they could not take better means of doing it than by repeating discourses, no matter how excellent, without first seeing whether they were adapted to the people. Even were Peter himself raised again he would be a failure in the present day if he wouldn't study the wants of the age and adapt himself to the mind of the age and church.

3rd. "If you would be useful you must place yourself at the feet of Christ." Dr. Pierson enlarged eloquently upon the idea of learning to work in the place for which we are best adapted; even where the circumstances seemed adverse and sometimes trying. He related how that it was a cripple who first suggested the idea of an artificial limb, and also that it was a blind man who suggested the idea of "raised letters."

4th. "There must be entire consecration," which point was urged in forcible and eloquent language.

Dr. Pierson concluded a very able sermon which occupied forty minutes, and of which the above is only a meagre outline, with a very earnest application, in which he insisted that the whole life should be permeated with religion; and that religion practised in the workshop and in the mart of business preached the gospel more eloquently than he did from the pulpit, and that the church at the present time is more in need of really religious business men than she is of Christian ministers.

Dr. Pierson is a man of rather slender build, about forty years of age, with rather a broad forehead. His voice is clear and distinct, and although it is not emotional, still there is fire and impressiveness. His sermons are concise, fresh, thoughtful, and pointed, and are characterized by a vigorous and manly eloquence. He holds the rapt attention of the hearer from the commencement to the close, and on this occasion, although the heat was oppressive, no one seemed wearied of the service.

As I stated at the outset Dr. Pierson's church is on Fort street, and if the sermons which I heard are samples of the preaching supplied I think he will be able to "hold the fort" of Presbyterian doctrine and worship against all apostles of error. With such preaching in the thousands of Presbyterian pulpits throughout the great Republic, there need exist no fears for the spread and triumph of Presbyterian principles and the extension and maintenance of Protestant truth generally. There never has been a time when pure gospel truth and Reformation doctrines were more required than at present. With Popery on the one hand boldly and defiantly asserting its superiority and infallibility, and infidelity on the other, preachers must preach the truth, pure and uncompromising, such as was preached by Calvin, and Luther, and Knox, and by the first founders of Christianity, whether men will hear or whether they will forbear.

The Rev. William Stevenson, formerly of Toronto and Hamilton, and who was called to succeed the Rev. G. M. Milligan, is doing a good work, and ably sustaining the cause in that section of the city.

Our friends on the other side the lines are well worthy of a visit from Canadians, and any of your readers who tries the experiment will be convinced that a Canadian Presbyterian will meet with a hearty reception from the American Presbyterian Church, and then there is much to be learned by these visits. Americans are decidedly far ahead of us in their management of Sabbath schools, and in the particular attention which they give to this department of Christian work; but to which I have not now room to refer at any greater length.

CANADIAN.

Toronto, 24th July, 1877.

THE RELIGIOUS TRAINING OF THE YOUNG.

EDITOR BRITISH AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN.

SIR,—I have been a subscriber to your paper since its publication, and have noted with pleasure the successful endeavours made from time to time to supply a felt want amongst the press of Ontario.

THE BRITISH AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN is now worthy of a place in any family of our united Church, whose interests and principles it so well represents and defends at all times against the prevailing latitudinarianism of this opinionative age. Yet from certain indications it has not that extensive circulation amongst Presbyterians it deserves, and which the signs of the times demand.

Parents are very anxious to give their children a good common school education. Ample provision has also been made by the Church and Sabbath schools for imparting religious instruction. Large sums of money are annually expended in maintaining libraries and supplying religious papers and periodicals for these schools. Yet it is to be regretted that a knowledge of our own Church—its history—the distinctive principles which the great fathers of the Reformation in Scotland, England, and Germany so successfully contended for, does not run parallel with a knowledge of the history of England, Europe or Canada. Presbyterian children are not less intelligent or religious than the children of other Protestant denominations. We believe they are more intelligent and receive a more thorough religious education generally than others do. Yet why they are Presbyterians; what is Presbyterianism; and what is the difference between it and other "isms," are questions seldom or never mentioned in the family, or brought before the attention of the children in the Church or school. THE BRITISH AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN is representative—it is a good educator—it exhibits the doings and principles of the denomination in a concise, clear, and intelligent way, and consequently should be introduced into every family connected with our united Church.

If our children are to continue Presbyterians they must be intelligent. If they are expected to uphold, defend and teach

the doctrines and principles of their Church, they must be taught these doctrines and principles at the proper time and in the proper place.

The idea is too prevalent—ministers confess it—professors too often make long apologies when called upon to address children; Sabbath school teachers shrink from their duty in this respect all because forsooth they cannot "come down" to children. It is a mistake—a delusion—originating only in ignorance, pride of intellect, or a desire to affect superior education.

This want of adaptation—this public confession on the part of those entrusted with the religious instruction of the rising generation has been and still is productive of great evil. What are the facts? Shrewd business men, shallow novelists and others, professing to be deeply interested in the training and spiritual welfare of children, have, doubtless for mere worldly gain, flooded the press and book stores of the country with every conceivable book, periodical, and card—suited for any capacity and no capacity—so that parents are often astonished at the number, puzzled in the selection, and oftentimes grieved at the results. These are too apparent. No solid and useful reading is sought after—no desire to grasp a principle or evince a knowledge of any of the great social or other questions which at present agitate the world.

The foundation of our common school education (good as it is) is laid in "tales and fables of a kind likely to prove pleasing to the mind of childhood." Our Churches and Sabbath schools carry forward the same idea by placing in our libraries and elsewhere books of a like character, oftentimes highly coloured with falsehood and improbability, and hence the mind is totally unfitted for prosecuting the higher studies of life.

We believe that parents and churches are not paying that attention to the religious training of the young which the importance of the case demands; and hence where this education is supposed and expected to be nearest perfection, we find few desiring to prosecute their studies with a view of entering upon the all-important duties of the ministry.

Let our children be trained. Let them above all have a thorough religious training, especially in the family. Let them have an intelligent knowledge of the principles and doctrines of the Presbyterian Church, founded as these are on the doctrines of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Then and then alone can we expect them to occupy that high vantage ground for carrying forward to completeness the pressing reforms so much needed in the world and Church.

Craving your indulgence for trespassing so much on your valuable space, I am, yours respectfully,
A. J. G. H.

London, July, 1877.

INFANT SALVATION.

MR. EDITOR,—The question of infant salvation, lately handled in your columns, is very correctly discussed in connection with the doctrine of original sin.

The doctrine of original sin, as held by our Church, was first clearly stated by Augustine, and is expressed by Calvin as follows:—"Original sin is a hereditary corruption and depravity of the whole nature. . . . This corruption is repeatedly designated by Paul by the term *sin*, (Gal. v. 19,) while the works which proceed from it, the fruits of *sin*, are also termed *sins*. . . . Hence, even infants, bringing their condemnation with them from their mother's womb, suffer not for another's but for their own defect. . . . Their whole nature is a seed-bed of sin, and is properly deemed sinful in the sight of God.—Calv. i. p. 217. While, in virtue of our being federally represented in Adam, his act is imputed, as ours, otherwise it would be difficult to see the justice of our sharing in the effects of his fall, yet, as Jonathan Edwards states, and as our larger catechism teaches, original sin is commonly held to express the innate depravity with which we are born. The distinction which Zwingle, Muller, and other theologians make between the innate depravity of the infant, and the guilt attaching to a personal act, is legitimate: the former is the *morbus*, the latter *peccatum*. It is well to notice also that Paul, in Rom. v., is not discussing the doctrine of infant salvation, but the general doctrine of our fall in Adam. It is therefore just as illogical to conclude that because all infants are guilty of original sin, therefore all are not saved, as it would be to affirm that the *morbus* and the *peccatum* are equally guilty in the sight of God.

While the doctrine of infant salvation is one of no small interest to the Christian community, it is one beset with many difficulties, because of the little light which the Scriptures shed upon the subject; and these difficulties are not lessened by the fact that we are left to make inferences from Scriptural statements, which may be of different values in the eyes of different men. The settlement of the question is not, however, to be based on the doctrine of original sin, but rather on that of God's electing love.

Mr. McKay, in his sermon on Infant Salvation, holds that infants have original sin, and that "God would have been infinitely just though he had left the whole human race, infants included, to perish." To make room for the salvation of all infants, he lays down the proposition, "Children dying in infancy are free from the ground of condemnation." This position his critic challenges as an "assumption," "without a fragment of Scripture evidence," and as "smacking of Pelagianism." The critic does not deny infant salvation, but leaves us to infer his views, and enters a very strong protest against ministers going farther than God's revealed Word warrants them. His view of infant salvation must be one of three, viz.: that all the children of believing parents dying in infancy shall be saved; or some of them shall be saved; or some of the children of believing parents, and some of unbelieving parents, dying in infancy shall be saved. From certain remarks in his published letters we presume he holds the former view. While in his letters he professes to wield the unerring weapon of an incisive logic, and incessantly calls on the author of the sermon for proof, he will doubtless pardon us if we ask him to use the same weapon against his own view. He will bear with us if we ask his proof for his own belief. If, from the very few cases, cited in Scripture, of the salvation of children of believing parents, a conclusion be drawn that all the children of believing parents who die in infancy are saved, it does seem—if we are to be guided by a process of rigorous logic—that his belief rests on no better a basis than an *ignoratio elenchi*. If no authority less than Paul or some other inspired writer will satisfy him, then we may be permitted to ask for the decisive passage which places his view of infant salvation on an inviolable basis. That concerning the "unclean" and the "holy" which, he says, he has heretofore followed, is scarcely admissible, inasmuch as, according to the views of the best theologians the Apostle is not discussing infant salvation in that passage. See Ursinus, Olshausen, Henry, Alford, Brown & Fausset, Barnes, etc. If, in the absence of some express and particular passage, he from different Scriptural statements draws an inference that all the children of believing parents, dying in infancy, are saved, why should he be so unkind as to refuse to the author of the sermon the liberty of drawing an inference, from passages quoted, that all children dying in infancy are saved? While the critic is so urgent for proof, it is well to remind him that the author uses the following passage, p. 14: "That each of these (eight) reasons is conclusive in itself, or even that all of them taken together amount to a mathematical demonstration, I do not pretend," and adds that they are sufficient to confirm his own belief in the doctrine.

We have already said that Scripture says very little on the subject of infant salvation. It may be, Mr. Editor, of some interest to your many readers to transcribe the opinions of some of the leading Calvinistic theologians bearing on this point.

"Do our children die in infancy? Make this use of it. I have an assured hope that my child has gone to God; he was born in the covenant, and had its seal, baptism. Why should I doubt of the salvation of my child?"—*Sibbes*, vol. vi., p. 581.

"I hope there is none among us that is such a *durus infantum pater*, hard and harsh a father of infants, but to admit that many infants may be saved, and may become blessed creatures hereafter. They are part of that body which Jesus gave himself to purchase and sanctify."—*Howe*, vol. vii., p. 511.

"If we would allow ourselves the liberty of reasoning concerning such of ours as die in infancy, and that, when they have but newly looked into the world are presently caught out of it. . . . how much greater a thing is it to be adoring God above in the society of angels, than to be dandled on the knee? . . . They have a part to act upon an eternal stage, to be constantly monuments and instruments of the glory of their great Creator and Lord."—*Howe*, i., p. 59.

"But as infants are capable of all the essentials of regeneration, so, *de facto*, it is evident that God regenerates multitudes of them whilst such; and indeed, the half of mankind dying whilst infants, it may be well supposed, that as great a portion, at least for numbers, are found amongst the seed that die, as experience showed was amongst them that lived, and so were inwardly circumcised."—*Goodwin*, vol. vi., p. 85.

I travelled the gloomy road six times, and learned that God has other uses for children than our comfort, a use far more honourable and happy for them."—*Boston*, vol. iv., p. 186.

The above quotations taken from writers of the puritan period, substantially express the sentiments of Turretine on this subject.—See vol. ii., sec. xv., ques. 14.

Mr. Mackay, in his sermon, when expounding the Confession of Faith, endeavours to fortify his position by saying that the sentiment that any children are lost cannot be found in the writings of any Calvinist. The following from the pen of Dr. Thos. Goodwin, one of the members of the Westminster Assembly, shows that his reading on this subject is not sufficiently extensive to entitle him to speak with confidence.

"But you will say doth God inflict eternal death merely for the corruption of nature upon any infants? It must be said yes. We are children of wrath by nature, and unless there come in election among them, for it is election saveth, and is the root of salvation, it must needs be so. Sodom and Gormorrah all suffered the vengeance of eternal fire, and surely there were

multitudes of infants there; and if they had been righteous as well as others, they might have been put into Abraham's plea, but they were not."—*Goodwin*, 185.

Coming to later times, we find that the Theologians of our Church are inclined to take a more liberal view, as the following quotations from Principal Cunningham will show:—"Neither is there anything in Calvinism necessarily requiring, or implying a more unfavorable view than Arminianism exhibits, of the ultimate destiny of those of the human race who die in infancy, without giving any palpable manifestation of moral character. And while all Calvinists hold that many infants, baptized and unbaptized, are saved, there is nothing in their Calvinism to prevent them from believing that all who die in infancy may have been elected and may be saved through Christ. They are fully alive to the fair influence of the consideration that this subject is, from its very nature, an inscrutable mystery, and that very little light is thrown upon it by any information given us in Scripture. Upon these grounds Calvinists have thought it right to abstain from dogmatic deliverances upon this subject, but many of them have been of opinion that there are indications in Scripture, though not very clear or explicit, which favour the idea that all dying in infancy are elected and saved; and there is nothing in their Calvinism to prevent them from believing this."—*Reformers and Theology of Reformation*, p. 566. "There is nothing to prevent a Calvinist believing that all dying in infancy are saved."—*Historic Theology*, Vol. ii., p. 477; Dr. A. A. Hodge, in his Commentary on the Confession of Faith, says, "The Confession adheres in this place accurately to the facts revealed. It is certainly revealed that none, either adults or infants, are saved, except on the ground of a sovereign election; that is, all salvation for the human race is pure grace. It is not positively revealed that all infants are elect, but we are left, for many reasons, to indulge a highly probable hope that such is the fact. The Confession affirms what is certainly revealed, and leaves that which revelation has not decided, to remain, without the suggestion of a positive opinion upon one side or the other."

From the foregoing extracts, it will appear that Mr. McKay has not been guilty of any great extravagance in the eyes of the church by teaching the salvation of all those who die in infancy.

We now come to enquire whether it be, as Mr. Batisby claims, a doctrinal error for Mr. McKay to affirm that "Children dying in infancy are free from the ground of condemnation."

If, instead of a sermon on Infant Salvation, the author had published one on Original Sin, containing the clause, there would have been some ground for the critic's accusing him of Pelagianism, but it is difficult to understand what other ground can be occupied by Calvinists who believe in the Salvation of all who die in infancy.

The difficulty experienced by the Critic arises from the fact that the proposition objected to is not an inference drawn by the author from the doctrine of Original Sin, but is the conclusion to which he is logically led, from his belief that all who die in infancy are elected to Eternal Life. We grant there may be some room for the Critic's charging his author with reasoning in a circle, but nothing more.

That we have taken a correct view of the Critic's position, is evident from the fact that he refuses to look at the proposition as one stated in connection with infant salvation, but persists in viewing it in connection with the doctrine of Original Sin. And though the author says in reply, "The question is not as to the existence or desert of Original Sin," the Critic, in his next letter proceeds to select one out of three views of Original Sin which he attributes to the author. In his third letter he is so candid as to own to Mr. Donald that he is not discussing the question of Infant Salvation, but "their freedom from the ground of condemnation." Thus the Author discusses one subject; the Critic discusses another.

There is nothing in the Confession as interpreted by the ablest theologians, to prevent the author, should he see fit, to take the position he does. There is nothing, so far as we know, to prevent his Critic from rushing to the front, to do valiant battle for the truth. He is at liberty to assure us of his ability to measure his sword of sarcasm with his opponent. He is at equal liberty to tell the Church that he "will drive him into a miserable corner." He may, if he please, construct his logical gillnettes, for the special benefit of inconclusive reasoners, but it is well to remember that in this case he must first dispose of those whom the church has esteemed giants among their fellows; men, in whose hands the truth is deemed safe.

It seems to us that had the church decided to express her views somewhat fully on the subject of Infant Salvation, a Theologian, other than the author of the Sermon would have been chosen; and were the church to subject such a declaration to revision, some scholar, other than the Critic, would have been selected.

It further occurs to us, that criticism, in the varied walks of literature, is effective, in so far as it is just and charitable; and that, more especially in Theology, should the critic discover a want of that charity which suffereth long and is kind, he will become to his readers "as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal."—O.

[All parties to this discussion have had fair opportunity for expressing their views, and no complaint can possibly be made if we now declare the correspondence closed, so far as these columns are concerned.—Ed. B.A.P.]

A MAN may want liberty and yet be happy, as Joseph was; a man may want peace, and yet be happy, as David was; a man may want children and yet be blessed, as Job was; a man may want plenty and yet be full of comfort, as Michael was; but he that wants the gospel wants everything that should do him good. A throne without the gospel is but the devil's dungeon. Wealth without the gospel is fuel for hell. Advancement without the gospel is but a going high to have the greater fall.—Owen.