

SOUTHERN PRESBYTERIAN REVIEW.

NUMBER II.

OCTOBER, MDCCCLV.

ARTICLE I.

THE INFLUENCE OF PRESBYTERIANISM ON THE CULTURE OF THE HUMAN INTELLECT AND THE PROGRESS OF PIETY.

The influence of the Presbyterian system on the culture and progress of the human intellect well deserves attention and investigation on the part of the philosopher and the Christian. We doubt not that the influence alluded to will be discovered, on careful and candid inquiry, to have been deep, wide-spread and salutary. A system so thoroughly organized as Presbyterianism, so powerful, so far-reaching, and so abiding in its general workings, cannot fail to exert a vast influence in elevating the human mind, or else in debasing it. Every political system, carried into practical operation, has an influence on mind, and every religious system, since no subject agitates man's soul so profoundly as that of religion, must exert at least as marked an influence, in proportion to the area over which it operates. Fetichism, the lowest form of religion, arising from a low condition of the human intellect, serves to fetter it in debasement and darkness. Christianity, the noblest form of religion, elevates, expands and ennobles the intellect of man.

It is, in every respect, important to ascertain the influence of any religious system on the human mind. That influence, according to the nature and degree of it, furnishes presumptive proof of the truth or falsity of the system itself. Whatever debases the intellect, tends also to ~~debase the~~ heart: whatever improves the intellect, tends also to ~~elevate~~ and purify man's moral nature; so

grand diapason of Heaven. The angels with the four and twenty elders, shall fall down before Him, who sitteth upon the throne, and worship Him, who liveth forever and ever.

Thus, the heavens shall proclaim the song, and earth will echo back the notes till every place shall be full of the praise and glory of God.

“Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in the firmament of his power. Praise him for his mighty acts; praise him according to his excellent greatness. Let every thing that hath breath praise the Lord. Praise ye the Lord.”

ARTICLE V.

THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY EITHER THE OFFSPRING OF REASON OR OF PRIMITIVE REVELATION.

No argument, says Bishop Horsley,* can be drawn from any resemblance that may be imagined between the Trinity of the Christian Church, and the three principles of the Platonists, that the doctrine of the apostles was not rightly understood by their first converts; unless indeed it could be proved, which is the tacit assumption upon which this objection is founded, that the discoveries of revelation and the investigations of philosophy may never coincide. But why is it supposed that nothing can be a part of an inspired teacher's doctrine, which had been taught before by wise men who were not inspired? Were every iota of the gospel doctrine to be found in the writings of the Greek philosophers, this would not be sufficient to set aside the pretensions of the first preachers of christianity to a divine commission. The just conclusion from so perfect an agreement would only be, that for the great importance of these doctrines to the manners of mankind, it had pleased God to make discoveries to all men by revelation, to which a few only could obtain by abstract reasoning. The case indeed is far otherwise. It is ever to be remembered, for the mor-

* Horsley Tracts, pp. 45-50.

tification of man's pride, and to the praise of God's mercy, that "when the world by wisdom knew not God," when philosophy had made its utmost efforts not entirely without success, but with little general advantage, "it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching," by a method of instruction, which in the article of religious information, hath abolished the distinction between the philosopher and the idiot "to save them that believe." But had our supposed case actually obtained, had revelation discovered nothing more to all than reason had previously taught a few, still to teach all, and to teach a few is so different a business, that the previous attainments of philosophers would have afforded no objection against the pretensions of the first preachers of the gospel, sufficient to overturn the evidence by which their claim to a divine commission is supported. Much less may a resemblance, more or less exact, between faith and philosophy in single articles, create a presumption that those articles of faith, of which certain philosophical opinions seem to carry a resemblance, made no part of the doctrine which those inspired teachers taught. The resemblance may seem indeed a wonderful fact, which may justly draw the attention of the serious and inquisitive. And if it should be deemed incredible,—as well it may,—that reason, in his utmost strength, should ever ascend so high, as to attain even to a distant glimpse of truths, which have ever been esteemed the most mysterious discourses of revelation; it will become a question of the highest curiosity and importance, to determine by what means the Platonic school came by those notions of the Godhead, which, had they been of later date than the commencement of christianity, might have passed for a very mild corruption of christian faith; but being in truth much older, have all the appearance of a near, though very imperfect view, of the doctrine which was afterwards current in the christian church.

The inquiry becomes more important when it is discovered that these notions were by no means peculiar to the Platonic school; that the Platonists pretended to be no more than the expositors of a more ancient doctrine; which is traced from Plato to Parmenides; from Par-

menides to his masters of the Pythagorean sect; from the Pythagoreans to Orpheus, the earliest of the Grecian mystagogues; from Orpheus to the secret lore of the Egyptian priest, in which the foundations of the Orphic theology were laid. Similar notions of a triple principle prevailed in the Persian and Chaldean theology, and vestiges even of the worship of a Trinity were discernible in the Roman superstition in a very late age. This worship the Romans had received from their Trojan ancestors. For the Trojans brought it with them into Italy from Phrygia. In Phrygia it was introduced by Dardanus so early as in the ninth century after Noah's flood. Dardanus carried it with him from Samothrace, where the personages that were the objects of it were worshipped under the Hebrew name of Cabirim. Who these Cabirim might be, has been matter of unsuccessful inquiry to many learned men. The utmost that is known with certainty is, that they were originally three, and were called by way of eminence, the great or mighty ones; for that is the import of the Hebrew name. And of the like import is their Latin appellation, Penates. *Dii per quos penitus spiramus, per quos rationem animi possidemus. Dii qui sunt intrinsecus atque intimis penetralibus cœli.* Thus the joint worship of Jupiter, Juno, and Minerva, the Triad of the Roman capitol, is traced to that of the three mighty ones in Samothrace; which was established in that island, at what precise time it is impossible to determine, but earlier if Eusebius may be credited, than the days of Abraham.

The notion of a Trinity therefore, more or less removed from the purity of the Christian faith, is found to have been a leading principle in all the ancient schools of philosophy, and in the religions of almost all nations; and traces of an early popular belief of it appear even in the abominable rites of idolatrous worship. If reason was insufficient for this great discovery, what could be the means of information but what the Platonists themselves assign: "a theology delivered from the Gods," i. e. a revelation. This is the account which Platonists who were no Christians, have given of the origin of their Master's doctrine. But from what reve-

lation could they derive their information, who lived before the Christian, and had no light from the Mosaic? For whatever some of the fathers may have imagined, there is no evidence that Plato or Pythagoras were at all acquainted with the Mosaic writings; not to insist that the worship of a Trinity is traced to an earlier age than that of Plato or Pythagoras, or even of Moses. Their information could only be drawn from traditions founded upon earlier revelations; from scattered fragments of the ancient patriarchal creed, which was universal before the defection of the first idolaters, which the corruptions of idolatry, gross and enormous as they were, could never totally obliterate. Thus the doctrine of the Trinity is rather confirmed than discredited by the suffrages of the heathen sages; since the resemblance of the Christian faith and the Pagan philosophy in this article, when fairly interpreted, appears to be nothing less than the consent of the latest and the earliest revelations.

Whence, asks Tholuck, came these melancholy aspirations, among the heathen, destitute of any special revelation? As we have before said, they might be the utterance of the most deep-seated feelings in human nature, which finds not perfection and harmony in the existing state of things, and therefore seeks them at the beginning and the end of the world. Their narratives, also, of the sufferings and conflicts of a Divine being with the miserable and wicked being, might equally be the expressions of the holiest feelings and deepest consciousness of men, (involving the sentiment) that all which is Divine in this world, corrupted and ruined with respect to them, can be maintained only by a severe conflict; yea, that in this world there is a hostile power, more mighty and more successful than the divine, which is thus compelled often to bow and submit; but that, notwithstanding this fearful struggle, what is born of God overcometh the world, and the final triumph awaits that which is divine. If those traditions and narratives represented nothing more than these ideas, they were the precious relics of the primeval world, the dearest heritage of the human race. But why should not those images and notions be much rather considered as drops

from the rich stream of Divine revelation, which at the beginning of the ages came down from Heaven to men? From that primitive source, might they not have descended to all nations? The remarkable unanimity of these traditions speaks strongly in favor of a common historical origin; and, therefore, that from the time in which man, fallen from his happy state, received the promise of an heroic deliverer, who should tread upon the serpent's head,—from that very time, longing desires and expectations of a future restoration, and a period of recovered happiness, were transmitted in the lines of families and nations, a beam of consoling light in the gloom of an unsatisfying and comfortless world.*

ARTICLE VI.

TYPES OF MANKIND.

Types of Mankind: or Ethnological researches, based upon the Ancient Monuments, Paintings, Sculptures, and Crania of Races, and upon their natural, Geographical, Philological, and Biblical History; illustrated by selections from the inedited papers of SAMUEL GEORGE MORTON, M. D., (late President, &c.) and by additional contributions from Prof. L. AGASSIZ, L.L.D.; W. USHER, M. D., and Prof. H. S. PATTERSON, M. D. By J. C. NOTT, M. D., Mobile, Alabama, and GEO. R. GLIDDON, formerly U. S. Consul at Cairo; Philadelphia: LIPPINCOTT, GRAMBO & Co.: 1854: pp. 738: 4to.

This ponderous quarto has been before our eyes for months past. But though we gave it an early perusal, with, we are sorry to say, a poor reward in the way of instruction and profit, we have not found time, amidst better and more congenial pursuits, to give utterance to our dissent from the positions it assumes. We do not deny to the chief authors the merit of untiring diligence and research, nor to the book itself the credit of being

* See in Smith's Messiah, vol. 1, p. 211.