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RECENT THEORIES OF FUTURE PUNISHMENT
IN THE LIGHT OF GENERAL CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE.

THE theories of Future Punishment which have lately attracted so much attention are ultimately to be judged by Scripture in its direct utterances on the question. The topic is confessedly so high and wide-reaching that no independent light of reason can satisfactorily settle the points that arise under it, and only the clear expression of the mind of God brought home to the minds of Christians by fair interpretation can be expected to give such rest as is attainable in such a matter. I, for one, am persuaded that the direct testimonies of Scripture are sufficient to settle these points as they have been generally held in our received theology; and whatever difficulties may surround these conclusions, I desire to leave them with the Judge of all the earth, who will do right. But in addition to the direct testimonies of Scripture on these points, there is that indirect but most important testimony of Scripture which lies in the texture of Christian theology as a whole, and which is called by theologians the Analogy of Faith. The doctrines of Scripture are not insulated but symmetrical; and the soundness of our conclusions as to each in detail is to be tested by its harmony with all the rest. It is in this light that I shall endeavour to raise and to examine this question, so as to inquire how far the recent theories of future punishment, or, it may be, theories revived and modified (for this is immaterial), agree with the Bible theology as a whole. In this light I shall first examine the theory of Annihilation, and then that of Restoration. I shall not go into any detailed statement of the history or special features of different schemes under either head, but, considering what is common to all the schemes that may pass under the one name or the other, shall endeavour to bring them to this test. It is obvious that these two schemes must be considered separately, for they so greatly disagree with each other

is the theology of Christ and not of Confucius that we are commissioned to teach. Man that is born of woman has but a short time to live, and cannot afford to be tasting every muddy stream of religious thought, in order that he may the better appreciate the river of water of life which proceedeth out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. A comparative study of time-tables may be an excellent acquisition in its way, but the engineer who possessed it would find it a poor substitute for a minute acquaintance with the schedule of his own road. Even the study of the evidences of Christianity, important as it is, and even essential when one is professionally called to deal specifically with such subjects, may occupy too much of a minister's time. Borderland studies are not the special and exclusive province of the pastor; and if some men deal too little with current questions of belief, others deal so exclusively with the apologetic side of Christian theology that they injure their general usefulness; they spend their whole time in making clean and clear the approaches to the temple, when their proper place is within the walls, and their proper function is to minister at its altar.

But there is much to encourage us in the prosecution of theological study on the side of dogmatics. A new theology is not needed, but new theologians are; and within the old lines of confessional orthodoxy there is ample room for fresh thought, and a rich reward for patient investigation. The doctrines are few, but there is a kaleidoscopic variety of combination. The pastor is preaching, let us say, on the resurrection of Christ. Well, it is but a step from the empty grave of Jesus to the throned glory of humanity. *Cur Deus homo?* Has all been said that can be said in answer to Anselm's famous question? I do not know; but it is safe to say that no one who has pondered much on the doctrine of the incarnation, can regard "*I want to be an angel*" as a valuable contribution to the hymnology of the Church. FRANCIS L. PATTON.

THE FREEDMEN IN THE UNITED STATES.

THE Africans in the American Republic constitute a unique and most interesting class in that variously-populated land. Although the whole territory is now open to them, comparatively few reside in the Northern States. The climate of the south is much better suited to their constitution and their taste. It is generally estimated that they number about four millions in the Southern States. Some predicted their rapid diminution after their emancipation, and others their large increase; but their numbers remain about the same.

The condition, capabilities, and prospects of this people present many interesting problems to the statesman and the philanthropist, but especially to the Christian who loves the souls of all his fellow-men, and longs to see every nation and tribe brought under the dominion of Christ,

his King. Whatever freedom the franchise, favouring legislation, and the amplest means of secular education may promise for this people, we wish to take our readers to a higher point of observation, to look at them as immortal beings, and endeavour to give a fair and honest view of their present moral condition, so as to suggest their most important needs. And we believe that this is the true starting-point in the application of any adequate remedy for existing evils, and the prosecution of any efficient measures for the real advancement of this as of all other branches of the human family. Their general ignorance, their lack of persistent energy in efforts to secure an education, their false ideas of domestic training and of the importance and dignity of labour on the part of their children, their want of thrift, in the way of economy and the improvement of their homes, their extravagance in trifles and in show, and other similar items, undoubtedly have their place in a full estimate of their condition. But the elevation of their moral tone, through the infusion of Christian principles, is their first great want, and must lay the foundation for any solid improvement.

It may seem paradoxical, but it is true, that the coloured people in America, if not the most religious people in the world, will rank with any other. When we speak of them, therefore, as heathen or semi-heathen, we have a very different meaning from what we imply when we speak of the millions in Pagan lands who have never heard of the true God and of Jesus Christ whom He has sent; for not only is the "religious instinct" as strong in them as in the average of our race, but nearly all of them attend what pass for gospel services. There are individual exceptions, persons who neglect religion altogether, and there are neighbourhoods where no churches exist and no religious services are held; but these cases are rare. No population is more amply supplied with what are called the means of grace, and all pass under the Christian name. We find fearful errors and gross superstitions, even fetichism and other features of heathenism, but no formal or avowed idolatry, and scarcely a trace of infidelity. The doctrinal and ethical perversions which prevail among them are perversions of Christianity. And they have an immense membership in their numerous churches under the guidance of a coloured ministry that no man can number. Being entirely insensible to the false shame of a religious profession, and indeed without anything to produce it, they find it no cross to "join the Church," and, in fact, are generally eager to do so.

They are intensely fond of religious exercises, and maintain them everywhere. As an evidence of this extreme interest, they spend an amount of time in these services that when stated to non-observers seems incredible, often keeping up their meetings to the small hours of the night, and that too in many cases after a day of toil; and protracting them for many successive weeks, and even months. Nor does any one complain of weariness, dulness, or want of interest. They evidently enjoy these occasions, especially what are called "protracted meetings,"

which supply to them what popular amusements furnish to the masses of the whites. Other pleasures they have in the form of picnics, and parties, and balls, and visiting, and gossiping, and dressing, and feasting, and music; but no source of pleasure is so general as the excitement of their religious meetings. It gratifies their peculiar temperament and taste. Everything in them is full of life and movement. The effort is generally made to get up and keep up an excitement, and seldom without success, favoured as it is by the strongly-emotional nature of the audiences and the plans of the preachers; and, indeed, sustained excitement is with them the measure of profit. A "revival" can always be secured at the time and place appointed. One of their preachers, a very modest man, once informed the writer that he was "expecting soon to run a small revival" in his church. No class of religionists in the world can surpass them in the successful use of what is called "religious machinery."

But this feature is not confined to extraordinary occasions. Their regular exercises are all conducted with as much excitement as can be reached. The preaching is all hortatory and generally vociferous. When hearing them I have often been reminded of the conclusive proof given by an old lady that her preacher was the greatest of all—"you could hear him a mile;" and I have questioned whether the celebrated Stentor must not have been a coloured preacher. Their prayers, whether by ministers or private members (for it is their custom to call on members of the brethren to give aid in this service, and it is never refused), all show the same exciting features, and yet, sometimes, are well and forcibly expressed. Indeed it is a favourable circumstance that this is the gift in which they most excel—I mean in its spiritual aspects.

It is their singing, however, which is the most attractive of all their exercises. It is well known that they possess the musical talent in a very remarkable degree. You rarely find a negro without a good voice. In public worship they all sing, and sing with all their might; and if you could disregard their ludicrous mistakes in the words and the frequent lack of all sentiment and sense, poor as your ear might be you would enjoy the melody as well as the swelling volume of song, as it rises from their immense congregations of powerful voices.

To an observer from our phlegmatic race, accustomed to the seeming coldness and even apathy which are incident to our very orderly services, some of these are very attractive features. He is delighted to see a people enjoy their religion with so much zest, and so powerfully moved by its services; and he at first concludes that they excel all others in a pure and zealous devotion. Indeed we must admit that, even with the defects and errors to which we have alluded, these are, on the whole, very favourable indications. If they were sustained by a corresponding life, while it would still be desirable to raise them to a higher culture, we should feel that the grand desire of our hearts for these people was being substantially attained.

But this is very far from being the case. In regard to many of them,

indeed, we rejoice to say that we have no more doubt of their genuine piety than we have of any other class of professed Christians ; and in some we have known a ripe and beautiful development. But as to a vast proportion of those who have been gathered into their churches, we are compelled to express a very different judgment. The tendency to rely on mere profession and outward forms, and especially on the manifestation of excited emotion in religious exercises, and upon religious talk, to the neglect of the plainest duties of practical piety, is very strong, and almost universal. Their moral tone and standard are generally low. They have the most defective views of morality, and a wonderful disposition to leave it no place among the essentials of religion. Even after many years of intimate acquaintance with them, we are still amazed at the seeming insensibility of many, even of the better classes, to the obligation of contracts and the plainest duties of veracity and chastity ; and it is wonderful how they can interweave the most immoral ideas and practices with the very teachings and observances of religion.

In making these statements, we are aware how great diversity may be found in their moral condition in different communities and sections, so that what is strictly true of one locality does not apply to some others ; but we imagine that no actual observer, on a large scale, will question their general correctness. And surely where such fruits appear we cannot, even with the most indulgent charity, regard the tree as good. If Christianity has any certain merit, it is that it conquers human depravity, and effectually teaches men to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present evil world.

And yet, under all the circumstances, this sad state of things is no worse than we ought to expect. Without reference to other influences in the present and the past, about which there might be dispute, the general incompetency of their religious teachers is enough to account for it all. There are, indeed, instances of well-educated, pious, and devoted men, who are well qualified for the work ; and we rejoice to know that the number is increasing. But these are very few, and are mostly confined to the towns and cities ; while the mass of them are thoroughly incompetent, being without education even of the lowest grade, entirely untrained in mind and morals, ignorant of the Scriptures, filled with crude, false, and, in many cases, eminently mischievous religious notions, and hence destitute of all qualification to teach the truth and to guide souls to Christ. The only conceivable ground on which such men can be encouraged to continue in this work is the very absurd one, that an ignorant ministry is suited to a very ignorant people, and good enough for them. But in no instance is the maxim better proved, that the most ignorant people need the most intelligent and skilful instructors. These preachers share fully the superstition and fanaticism common amongst this people. They teach

not only the most absurd and puerile notions, but also some of the wildest and most abominable heresies—*e.g.*, that many practices which are sinful in others are innocent in Christians; that Christians cannot sin, do what they may. Thus they are emphatically “blind leaders of the blind.”

It might seem that with the Word of God in their hands they would be ensured against serious or flagrant errors, and that their reading of the Scriptures, accompanied with even their simple explanations, would at least do no harm, and might lead some to Christ. But alas! thousands of their ministers are unable to read a word, and do not desire to learn. It is a common saying with them that “the Bible is for the white man and the Spirit for the black man;” and thus they feel at liberty to palm off their foolish fancies, and false doctrines, and worse than false morality upon their credulous hearers as spiritual preaching, superior to Scripture instruction. With them the days of visions and revelations still continue, and they attach Divine authority to their dreams and imaginary sights and voices. One of them lately, in a sermon, formally propounded the doctrine that as Paul heard a voice and saw a light at his conversion others in our day may expect the same.

These form the lowest, but no doubt much the largest, class of their ministry. But even Bible-reading preachers are generally wholly unprepared to expound the Word, or even to quote it correctly. Think of a city preacher exhorting his flock to “bring forth *fruit* and *meat* for repentance;” and yet the writer heard this said! Think of a presiding elder, of much more than average ability, affirming that the first instance of the use of animal food recorded in the Bible is that of the flesh brought to Elijah by the ravens; and of another, explaining the words in the first Psalm—“nor standeth in the way of sinners”—as describing the conduct of the wicked in hindering sinners from coming to Christ; and still another, who rendered the description given of the severe trials to which the house built on the rock was exposed thus—“And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds turned *blue*.”

We mention these instances, not for amusement, but to illustrate a depth of ignorance in religious teachers that could not be conceived of without some such illustrations; and a thousand more could be given, much worse than these. They may provoke a smile, but they will fill earnest Christian hearts with sadness, as showing into what hands millions of souls in America have fallen. The saddest fact of all is that the great mass of this people prefer such preachers to any others, no matter of what denomination or howsoever gifted. Even those who cannot be charged with preaching above the heads of such hearers,—being plain and practical, impassioned and sprightly in their style, and thus seemingly adapted to the tastes of this people,—including many who, in former days, were eminently popular and successful in this very field, are now forsaken for coloured ignoramuses and fanatics. Hence the

latter have occupied the ground, and shut out many a labourer who could have done great good. Making all allowance for exceptional cases, and indulging all possible hope of a wider door for a cultivated white ministry, the present fact is, that the vast proportion of this people are completely under the control of an ignorant coloured ministry. The ministry presents to the coloured people the most available post of influence and prominence, and an easy way of getting a living. They are peculiarly fond of talk, and are not ordinarily restrained by diffidence or a sense of deficiency. Hence when they were emancipated they availed themselves of this opening most eagerly, and in large numbers. Finding their own colour the most popular in this calling, and that neither education nor character was required for it, there was a *rush* to the pulpit; in a little while the profession became absolutely crowded, and now the only limit is the number of possible congregations. A ridiculous instance is related by a reliable physician, a member of our Church, of a gentleman who, on visiting a farm on which there were thirteen men and asking how they were off for preaching, was told, "There are *nine* of us who try to preach." Comparatively few of them find their support from the ministry; but this does not diminish the supply, since their methods of preaching permit six days of secular labour every week.

Plainly, the grand remedy for the spiritual darkness in which this people is enveloped, with all its moral and eternal consequences, is a godly and educated Christian ministry. This is God's appointed instrumentality, and is as well suited and as essential to them as to any other. "How shall they hear without a preacher?" Undoubtedly the labours of a ministry which is already trained would be by far the most useful, at least for a time, until a native ministry can be raised up and educated. They are in need of help now, and are perishing every day for the want of it; and we sincerely wish they would accept the services of the many white ministers who are ready to preach to them. But while they decline those, we can do nothing better than begin at once the training of coloured men for this work. They would be far more ready to welcome these than white men, and would soon prefer them to ignorant coloured men. They will now, in many places, flock in crowds to hear an educated coloured preacher, and feel proud of him as a specimen of what their race can attain. This tendency can be fostered and increased. The work of educating their candidates up to any tolerable standard is difficult, and must be slow. But it can be done, and it is being done. This policy has been formally adopted by all the larger denominations in America—the whites taking the lead and providing the means. The Baptists have established a number of schools, some for this especial purpose, and others with a theological department. The Congregationalists, Episcopalians, and Methodists have also moved in the same direction. And the Romish Church, proverbial for its skilful and far-seeing policy, is educating coloured priests to gather in the freedmen in America. It would be very strange

if the Presbyterian Church, so long and justly famed for its high standard of ministerial training, as well as for its missionary spirit, should not take active measures to give this people an educated ministry of their own race. The Northern General Assembly has entered very heartily into this great work, and has established several schools for the purpose of training teachers and ministers, as well as for general education. And the Southern General Assembly, in the very heart of this population, thoroughly acquainted with their condition, peculiarities, and wants, and having ever cherished a deep sympathy in their spiritual welfare, has also embarked in this undertaking, although burdened with other work and embarrassed by poverty. Two years ago this Assembly established an institute for the training of coloured ministers, locating it at Tuscaloosa, Alabama. It has given it a prominent place in its ecclesiastical machinery, appointed an executive committee to manage its affairs, and called for an annual collection from all the churches for its support. This institute has not yet been attended by large numbers, partly because the Presbyterian Church has but a small constituency amongst the coloured people, but mainly because means have been wanting for the support of students.

To justify and encourage this undertaking, it is not necessary that we prove this people to be capable of the highest attainments in ministerial education ; but only that they can acquire a degree of mental discipline and an amount of Biblical and theological knowledge which will make them useful and edifying preachers of the gospel. We have no hesitation in affirming that this has been demonstrated by facts. They are not indeed gifted in the logical faculty, but they have fine memories, a fair ability to understand the essential doctrines of the Gospel, a practical turn of mind, deep emotion, readiness in illustration, and generally fluency of speech. It would be very unfair to judge of their capabilities by the slender attainments which they have made with very meagre opportunities. Some of them have shown a remarkable ability to acquire languages, and may we not find in this some promise of their success in exegetical, the best of all kinds of preaching? Harrison Ellis, the learned blacksmith of Alabama, was indeed a prodigy in the study of language, but his case may be approximated by others, and certainly redeems the race from the charge of incapacity. We have been much encouraged in our work at Tuscaloosa by the interest shown in the study of the words of Scripture, and the desire to learn the original languages.

The large proportion of the freedmen who profess religion are connected with the Methodist and Baptist Churches. The demonstrative and emotional features in the worship of the former, especially in what are called "altar exercises," are peculiarly attractive to them, and in their view form a justification of the wildest extravagances which mar their worship, including tumultuous singing, praying, exhorting, shouting, trances, and the like. It is to be lamented that this denomination is so much split up into separate churches, there being at least four branches

of the coloured Methodist Church. There is, however, a movement on foot for a union of two or more of them, which it is hoped will be successful.

The majority of this people are strong believers in the efficacy of immersion. It gratifies their love of form, and appeals powerfully to their senses. The washing away of their sins with baptismal water, and following Jesus into the liquid grave, is to them a comprehensible way of "getting religion," and taking up the cross.

It is a serious question whether the movement of the Romish Church to convert this population is likely to be successful. They are in many respects now widely apart; but it may well be feared that what with the flexibility of the Romish system on the one hand, and the flexibility of the moral and doctrinal views of this people on the other, success is by no means impossible. Whilst quiet worship, conducted mostly in an unknown language, may seem repulsive to a people so excitable and illiterate, even should these features be retained, the splendour of the Roman Catholic churches, with their gorgeous decorations and dresses, their pictures and images, their holy water and incense and gilded crosses, their imposing ceremonial and grand parades, their indulgences and confessions and penances, the very mystery with which they awe the minds of the unthinking, and their loose and accommodating system of morals, are all precisely adapted to charm and enchain this people. Let Romanists once secure a foothold in this field and spread out their snares, and Protestants will find the labour of evangelising the blacks increased at least tenfold.

The Presbyterian Church has never had a very large following amongst the coloured people. This is not due to a lack of interest on our part, for we claim full equality with our brethren in this respect. Indeed, in former days we were foremost in efforts to awaken a general interest on their behalf, as seen in our numerous publications and the action of our Church courts on this subject; also in giving them a large share of our ministerial labours, in establishing and teaching coloured Sabbath schools, in preparing books for their instruction, and in teaching them in our families. We had encouraging success in this work, in gathering a goodly number of them into our churches, where they were being trained as intelligent Christians. Some of this class still cling to us, and belong to the very best grade of their people, intellectually and morally. But under the rapid increase of a coloured ministry, in later times, in which our standard of ministerial fitness prevents our competing with other denominations, we have fallen behind.

Our characteristics as a denomination are not popular with the masses of this people. Our quiet, instructive method of preaching, our orderly worship, the simplicity of our forms, our terms of membership, and our strict code of living, are distasteful to them. But we believe that these features are precisely those which are best

suiting to train and elevate the race to its highest possible development. Just in proportion as our system is opposed to their peculiar weaknesses and faults, is it needed—for instance, to restrain their love of form, to cultivate intelligent piety, to teach them to act from principle, to develop the family relation and all domestic virtues, to elevate their standard and tone of morals, and to secure decorum and reverence in worship. We must seek, not the accession of members by popularising our system to suit their evil tendencies, but the building of them up in Christian knowledge and piety, though it be within narrower limits. And hence it is the purpose of our Church to labour assiduously to secure access to them for our own ministry as widely as possible; and also to raise up an educated coloured ministry as speedily as our means will permit;—looking to the favour of God for the removal of all hindrances, and the full establishment of the work of our hands.

C. A. STILLMAN.

BRIEF NOTES ON CHRISTIAN CULTUS.

PRESBYTERIAN worship underlies the imputation, among Christians of other communions, of being a cold and bare form of Divine service, unimpressive to strangers, feeble in its utterance of devout emotion, and, above all, devoid of æsthetic grace. So frequently, and in so many shapes, have such reproaches been made, that a very general impression has been created, that whatever strong points Presbyterianism may boast, it has, at all events, one weak point, and that is its conduct of public worship.

Rejoinders are not far to seek. For example, it may be alleged that it is not fair to judge all Presbyterian worship by certain instances of it which are found in rude societies, or which, from being described in well-known literature, have struck the popular fancy. The best known Churches of our order, it might be urged, are precisely those British ones which, in deference to the extreme Puritan reaction against Laudian ceremonialism two centuries ago, pared their service down to the barest skeleton—a process from the effects of which they have not yet wholly escaped; whereas such Churches as have retained with the least alteration a more ancient and genuine type of Presbyterian worship happen at this day to be comparatively obscure.

Or a bolder line of apology may be attempted. A severely simple ritual, it may be pleaded, is most in harmony with the character of Reformed and Evangelical Christianity. The genius of our faith excludes the symbolical, the sensuous, and the sacerdotal. Exclude with rigour these foreign elements, and the result, it may be thought, will be a style of worship closely akin to that for which Presbyterianism is so freely aspersed.

In the arguments of those who thus asperse, and of those who thus