

Miscellaneous.

THE COLORED RACE HAVE TO SUFFER FROM THE SOUTHERN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH.

The sittings of the late Southern Assembly, we noticed, in the discussions respecting the church status of ministers and churches, what then like a disposition to rise superior to accidental distinctions which have to do with the place of people in the school of Christ.

Resolved, 1. That this Assembly enter into the freed people the sincerest feelings of good will and affection; that it desires and prays for their salvation and would encourage the employment of every legitimate means for the redemption of their spiritual good; that it believes the present condition of the colored race in the country to be an alarming spiritual jeopardy, and that lies in our power to save them from the calamities by which they are assailed, and to confer on them the rich blessings of the Gospel.

Resolved, 2. That it be recommended to ministers and churches to exert themselves to the utmost of their ability to give the Gospel to these people in church sessions to urge upon them among them the duty of presenting children for baptism, and of bringing up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; and to pastors, evangelists and missionaries to devote a portion of their time to the promotion of the salvation of these people.

Resolved, 3. That in the judgment of this Assembly, it is highly inexpedient that there should be an ecclesiastical separation of the white and colored races; that such a measure would threaten evil to both, and especially to the colored, and therefore it is desirable that every practicable effort be made affectionately to bind the freed people from severing their connection with our churches, and to retain them with us as of old. Should they decline this fellowship of ordinances, we desire a separate organization, then our churches are authorized to organize them in branch congregations. In such cases, the Assembly recommends that such organizations shall be allowed, under the sanction of the sessions, to elect from among themselves, every year, such number of superintendents or watchmen as the sessions may advise, who shall be charged with the oversight of such congregations. Their superintendents shall report to the sessions for their action, all matters relating to the welfare of said congregations.

Resolved, 4. Whenever Presbyteries may find it necessary to organize separate colored congregations, they shall appoint a commission of elders who shall discharge the functions committed to the sessions in the preceding resolutions.

Resolved, 5. That while nothing in our standards, or in the Word of God, prohibits the introduction into the Gospel ministry of duly qualified persons of any race, yet difficulties arise in the general structure of society, and from providential causes, which may and should restrain the application in the Church of this abstract principle. Holding this in view, the Assembly recommends that wherever a session of Presbytery shall find a colored person who shall possess suitable qualifications, they are authorized to license him to labor as an exhorter among the colored people under the supervision of the body appointing him.

Resolved, 6. That the Assembly recommends whenever it is practicable, Sabbath-schools for the benefit of the freed people, especially the young, be established in connection with our churches, and that the sessions of the churches take these schools under their charge, and provide suitable teachers for them.

Resolved, 7. That the heads of families be exhorted to encourage the freed people in their households to attend upon family public worship, and that they provide, as far as possible, catechetical instruction in the doctrines and duties of the Gospel.

Resolved, 8. That the General Assembly earnestly desire the intellectual and moral improvement of the colored race, and thereby tender to all persons suitably qualified, who may labor in the work, its encouragement and support.

The New York Observer passes a justly severe censure upon this action. The following paragraphs from that paper bring its true import from the nimbus of a confessed tenderness for the colored race, and put it into plain English, revealing the despotic spirit of the most glorious days of the patriarchal institution.

"The most important point in the action of this Assembly, and one which has a startling significance, as coming from a high court of Jesus Christ, is the deliberate resolution to make an utter distinction in the Church of God between those who have a white skin and those who have a black one, and to shut out from all the offices of the Church the latter, no matter whether they have been called of God, or how well qualified they may be in other respects. The simple question of color is to determine whether a man is to be admitted to the ministry, or even to the office of ruling elder; and this is so decided by a large body of learned and able Christian ministers and ruling elders, professedly acting in the name of that God who, in calling His people out of darkness into His marvelous light, and in calling them into the ministry of reconciliation, cannot be supposed to select them according to the complexion of their skin. The resolutions go still further. They effectually prevent the organization of a single church composed of colored people alone, anywhere in connection with the Presbyterian body represented by this Assembly. We presume, from the circumstances of the case,

and from the character of the discussion, that there was no serious objection to churches composed of colored people, excepting on the ground that they could not have churches without elders; but if they had elders of their own color, those elders would be entitled to take their seats in the Presbyteries and Synods, and even in the General Assembly. Colored churches, too, might elect colored pastors, who, according to the Presbyterian doctrine of parity in the ministry, would be placed on an equality with white ministers; and so, to prevent the possibility of meeting on the same level, even in the Church, the whole system of exclusion was adopted; no colored man can be a minister of the Gospel; no colored man can be a ruling elder; no churches composed of colored people can be organized. For proof that we do not misstate, or overstate, the nature and importance of this ecclesiastical decision, we refer our readers to the resolutions.

"The recommendation that 'wherever a session or Presbytery shall find a colored person who shall possess suitable qualifications, they are authorized to license him to labor as an exhorter among the colored people under the supervision of the body appointing him,' does not relieve, but rather aggravates the case, inasmuch as it admits that qualified persons may be found to exhort, or preach the Gospel, but it excludes them from discharging the functions of the ministry as they are black men. And so in cases where the freed people desire a separate organization, the sessions are authorized to organize them into branch congregations, but these organizations are not to be churches; they are simply meetings, having no church authority or privilege, but, in all respects, under the control of white churches, the same as if they met and worshipped with them."

THE WORLD'S CONVERSION TO JESUS CHRIST.

Comprehensively, our great missionary work is "to preach the Gospel to every creature." The completeness of the idea is in bringing back all these aliens to near communion with God. Heathen society is everywhere wretched in its unkindness. Selfishness reigns unbroken; they "live in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another." But the Pagan nations are still more miserable, in that they are "without God, and have no hope in the world." They have no conception of a Deity with whom it may be possible that man should hold joyful communion. Their gods are capricious and fickle, lavishing gifts in their fondness upon their favorites, which stimulates them to only a selfish and mercenary devotion, and wreaking vengeance in their wrath in such a bloody way as only to excite horror and hatred. There is no blending of majesty and mercy, and tempering the divine character with dignity and amenity, which may at once inspire reverence and love. The god and the man cannot meet peaceably together. The god will despise the man, and the man will contemn the god. No pagan devotes ever worships a Deity in whom he sees "mercy and truth meeting together, and righteousness and peace embracing each other."

But what paganism never apprehends, the Bible everywhere discloses. In the Christian economy, justice and grace ever meet and support each other. Authority is sustained, while benignity prevails. With all his terrible majesty on the smoking mountain, amid the thunders and lightning, still the divine Lawgiver proclaims himself "the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious." At the awful day of the last judgment, when he comes in clouds with all his holy angels, there is still the softening of the scene in the expiatory mark of the spear; and we look on him "whom they have pierced." The mixed majesty and mercy perpetually strike the sinner's attention, and win him to intimate and joyous communion. The human heart is here hit by the flash of combined severity and tenderness, as was denying Peter by the look of his Master; and in heathen and Christian lands alike, penitence goes away alone and weeps bitterly.

Philosophy analyzes and accurately discriminates the elements in these Christian experiences, but the practical metaphysician takes the facts which are the fruit of the speculation, and simply and directly uses them to bring back lost humanity into communion with propitiated Deity. There must be apprehended the severity tempered by placability. The sinner is not made alive by the Gospel, till first he has been slain by the law. Compassion will not effectually "persuade men," except as they also "know the terrors of the Lord."

Wherever this rational, as truly as evangelical, way of return to God is kept in obscurity or held in incompleteness, there will be, on any portion of the great field of benevolent labor, pagan or Christian, a large amount of religious effort utterly wasted. Much of that which is called powerful preaching, revival preaching, ardent missionary zeal, very soon exhausts all its efficiency. When the appeals are to the hope of human happiness mainly, or fear of coming misery, melting exhibitions of Jesus's sympathy with suffering humanity, there may be a quick interest excited, the freshness and force of which, soon passes off, and the themes become idle and empty as the tales of the nursery; even the sacred story of the Saviour's dying love may be told with such an application, that the power of the cross shall be made weakness. When put in the light merely of relief from wretchedness, or attainment of happiness, whether here or hereafter, the great transactions of Calvary will quickly wear out as motives to action. To him who closely reads human nature, there will be no mystery, under such influence, that so much apparent "goodness" is as the morning cloud and the early dew." He will not wonder that the sensational preachers and sensational hearers so soon get tired of each other.

But, on the other hand, that kind of dealing with fallen man, in any climate, which takes him into the presence of the heart-searching God, and obliges him to see the necessity of meeting and gaining preparation for communion with him; such never loses its power. It penetrates to the deepest fountains of the soul, and such motives never wear out. To these appeals the fear of saint and sinner ever opens, and the

convicted man is forced to cry out, "Behold, I am vile, what shall I answer? I will lay my hand upon my mouth." "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee, wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes!" We shall make the most Christians at home and abroad, we shall make the best Christians, when we constrain the most directly to the enquiry, "How shall I appear before God?" and when we bring the soul at length into the most intimate communion with God.

The nations of the earth wait for the day of universal peace, and all the families of mankind need to be brought together in love and kindness. Commercial intercourse will not effect this. Literature, philosophy, political economy, diplomacy, will never kindle and diffuse Christian philanthropy. The love of Christ shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost, and which brings into love and communion with God, will alone bring men truly to love one another. The greater contains the less, and communion with God holds within it also fellowship with man. We are to value communion with God, not as the means to get the further end that man should be kind to man, but because godly communion is itself the highest grace in its own excellency, and includes and sustains within itself love to man and all lower graces. It is the great end of Christian conversion itself, and the consummation of the Christian life, that the sinning soul has been brought to dwell in peace with God. We shall have finished our missionary work, and prepared the hearth for all other good, and brought humanity to its highest excellency, when we shall have brought the feeling of the Psalmist to be universal, "My soul longeth, and even fainteth for the Lord; my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God."

And now, brethren, this same thing, so important for the heathen world, is equally important for us in laboring for their salvation. As co-workers with God for a dying world, our first need is, that we come close to him, and keep in habitual communion with him. We shall so "be changed into his image from glory to glory," and our love and devotion to him will grow deeper and purer from year to year. This communion with the Father will be through the Son, but in the mediation of the Spirit we shall read the very heart of the Father. All that the Son suffered and does for a lost world is but fulfilling the plan and executing the will of the Father. Distinction of office and execution in the redemption-work makes no distinction in design and disposition. "Here the whole Deity is known;" the justice and the grace have equal glory; and the justice and the grace have no distribution in property or degree among the persons of the Godhead. Our communion here is with God in his unity, and the fellowship is equally with the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ, and with the Holy Ghost. In giving our hearts to God, we receive in return a Father's embrace, and an elder Brother's welcome, and the in-dwelling Spirit of perpetual consolation.

Here, too, we get our true and deep sympathy for the heathen. We shall pity their personal debasement, their social degradation, and, most of all, shall we pity their alienation from God. All other woes are as nothing compared with the absolute desolation of living without God. The same impulse will then move us toward them as that which sent the Saviour into our lost world. "Lo, I come to do thy will, O my God; I delight to do thy will." Communion in God's will is our best preparation for all missionary service. Nothing else can make us so strong to carry help to the lost nations and tribes of men. When discouragements and disasters and delays press upon us, nothing else can keep us so hopeful, so enduring, so persevering. Amid all sorts of hindrances, this will make us patient, courageous, and at length triumphant. In every difficulty and trial we have but to say,

"Nearer, my God, to thee,
Nearer to thee,"

and we shall go on refreshed and unfaltering. Near to God ourselves, we shall not fail nor grow weary in bringing others to Him. We shall expect and chose not to rest till we reach the heavenly communion.

Out of this fallen world, God has revealed to us that he will gather a redeemed world of his own. "He will purify to himself a peculiar people." In all ages he has had a seed to serve him, and the promised age is coming "when all shall know the Lord." Our part, brethren, in the good work will soon cease. But all are one in Christ Jesus, "of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named," and those who go up to their communion with God face to face, will have their places here filled with other workers, growing more numerous, more zealous, more successful. The spiritual temple shall gather its living stones from every land, and grow up to its finished consummation. The voices of all the holy in heaven and earth shall shout the top-stone to its place, crying, "Grace, grace unto it." "Every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."—President Hitchcock.

MYSTERY.

The fact that any doctrine involves a mystery is so far from constituting a fair ground for its rejection, that it agrees in this respect with many of the most allowed truths of human science. For the distinction is now well understood between a truth being apprehended and its being comprehended. We apprehend or recognize a fact, when we know it to be established by evidence, but cannot explain it by referring it to its cause. We comprehend or understand it, when we can view it in relation to its cause. A thing which is not apprehended cannot be believed, but the analogy of our knowledge shows that we believe many things which we cannot explain or resolve into law. We know the law of attraction which regulates the motion of the visible universe; but no one can yet explain the nature of the attractive power which acts according to the law. Or, to add an example from the world of organized nature. We know not in what consist the phenomena of sleep or of life; and we are equally ignorant of the final causes which have led the Creator to lavish his gifts in creating thousands of species of the lower order of animals, with few pro-

perities of enjoyment or of use; or to scatter in the unseen parts of the petals of flowers, the profusion of beautiful colors. In truth, the peculiarity of modern inductive science is that it professes to explain nothing. It rests content with generalizing phenomena into their most comprehensive statements and there it pauses. It in no case connects them with an ultimate cause. And if truths are thus received undoubtingly in science, when yet they cannot be explained, why must an antecedent determination to disbelieve mystery in religion be allowed to outweigh any amount of positive evidence which can be adduced to substantiate those mysteries?

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