

THE Presbyterian Quarterly.

NO. 54--OCTOBER, 1900.

I. THE IMPORTANCE OF PREACHING THE ETHICS OF CHRISTIANITY.

Shortly after the writer of this paper entered on his first pastorate, he preached a sermon from the third chapter of the Epistle of James on "Sins of the Tongue." At the close of the service a visiting minister came forward, introduced himself, expressed his interest in what he had heard, and also remarked that ethical sermons were both quite unusual and would be very useful in Presbyterian churches. This remark impressed him at the time, and during the nineteen years that have passed since then it has often recurred to him. In either one of its assertions it would seem to be true and important.

I. Directly ethical teaching does appear to be uncommon in our pulpits. In some quarters there is even a prejudice against it. There are places where, were a minister to expound duty at considerable length, it would be broadly hinted that his views of righteousness were becoming legal.

Where this prejudice against ethical teaching does not exist, the latter is still widely neglected. One of the worst features of the present state of religion among us is the frequent failure to receive the Bible as the infallible rule of practice as truly as of faith. Many who regard it absolutely authoritative in the latter sphere ignore it in the former. Not a few of those who are most earnest in their demand for Biblical theology seem unconscious that there

V. THE MONTGOMERY CONFERENCE ON RACE PROBLEMS AT THE SOUTH.

The Conference held in Montgomery, Ala., from May 8-10th, under the auspices of the "Southern Society for the Promotion of the Study of Race Conditions and Problems in the South," marked an epoch in the attitude of the South toward the tremendous issues involved.

As the first open parliament it has seemed possible for Southern men to hold for the consideration of the greatest problems any people were ever called upon to work out, the attention of the entire country was naturally centered upon the Conference.

The personnel of the Society, which now has members in every Southern State, and the programme for the Conference were a guarantee of the thoroughly representative character of the meeting as an expression of the varied and even antagonistic phases of Southern opinion on the subjects under consideration.

The Society has from the beginning announced as its sole desire to secure a more intelligent and frank statement of the issues involved, believing as Mr. Cochran well phrased it in his speech on May 10th, that "a problem accurately stated is a problem half solved." Depending not upon mechanical or theoretical solutions, but looking to the slow but sure processes of sociological and political evolution the Society offered no policy of its own to the Conference for it had none to offer. Out of such a frank and full presentation of the facts of the situation as was secured in the papers read before the Conference, and the subsequent careful study of the facts as presented, there cannot fail, however, to result not merely a better understanding of the problems at issue, but of the wisest and best politics to be pursued by those who through counsel and legislation mould public opinion and direct the affairs of public life.

Although under the rules governing the Conference, expressive of the purpose of the Society to "promote discus-

sion merely and not to favor any policy on any of the subjects under discussion," no motion or resolution of any sort was entertained by the presiding officer, it was inevitable that out of the discussion certain things should at once appear in a clearer light, and those views receiving practical unanimity of approval of speakers representing such widely different points of views, may be fairly regarded as fixed points of departure for future discussions of race problems in the South.

It is my purpose to set forth some of the things that have been more or less clearly defined by the discussions of the Conference.

1. There can be little serious dealing with the questions involved in the relation of the negro to the history of the South that fails to recognize the fact that he is a permanent factor of that history—that for better or for worse, in the Providence of God he is here, and here to stay. It has been at various time very popular to propose deportation as a remedy for the evils of the situation. Advocates of this theory have spoken as glibly of the transportation of ten million people as if it was merely the question of the shipping of a few thousand bales of cotton. But even were funds in unlimited amounts at the disposal of the advocates of this theory a generation must pass before it could be carried fully into effect were all other conditions of the problem of deportation met. But these conditions are not and cannot be met: The negro does not want to leave the United States, and particularly and in spite of the many stories of the terrible oppression to which he has been subjected in the South, does he decline to go from her borders. He long ago discovered what the North is just beginning to appreciate, that there is less racial and industrial prejudice against him in the South than in the North.

Not merely, however, does the negro not want to leave the South, but he is not wanted anywhere else. Recent events at Pana, Ill., are a standing advertisement of the fact that his importation into the industrial fields of the North will be resisted by the Gatling gun. A glance at

the map of Africa, the Mecca of all advocates of trans-oceanic colonization, will show that the dark continent has passed out of the possession of the dark races, and so far from desiring more negroes in Africa, the nations of Europe in possession of that continent are using every device known in scientific warfare, and the more destructive armament of advancing civilization, the gin shop, to make room for the sons of their own people ; while Cuba, Porto Rico and the Philippines furnish already as many race problems as the American people can well take care of at present.

The South has to bear its share of the white man's burden, and strange as it may seem, every effort made to lift that burden even by the transportation from one section of the South to another of this people who have for generations been the hewers of wood and drawers of water, the industrial units of its population has awakened as strenuous opposition from the Southern white man as has the attempt to import the negro miner aroused in Illinois. This is well illustrated by the excitement caused in Athens, Ga., a few weeks ago by the attempt of the celebrated emigration agent, known as "Peg-leg Williams," to induce the negroes of that section of Georgia to emigrate to Texas.

That the Montgomery Conference recognized the negro as a permanent factor in the history of the South was emphasized by the presentation of the deportation and transportation theory by an eloquent son of Georgia. There may have been some who agreed with the conclusions of the paper presented by him, but those with whom the writer has been privileged to talk were unanimous in their opinion that from the practical standpoint the paper was a *reductio ad absurdum* of the theory itself.

2. In view of the Mississippi constitutional amendment limiting the franchise, the pending constitutional amendment in North Carolina, and the avowed policy of the Democratic party in Alabama to secure a limitation of the franchise through the adoption of a new State Constitution it was expected that there would be intense interest in the discussion of the Franchise.

Col. Alfred Moore Waddell, Mayor of Wilmington, N. C., spoke as the representative of white supremacy, dominant under conditions of revolution, and ruling with a firm hand that brought order out of social and political chaos, and likewise a blessing to the weaker as well as the stronger race. As representing also what is believed by many to be the almost overwhelming sentiment of a vast majority of white men in North Carolina in demanding an educational qualification test at the polls, that shall secure the permanent supremacy of white men throughout the bounds of the Old North State, Col. Waddell received an attentive and earnest hearing second to that accorded no speaker at the Conference.

As opposed to the policy represented by Col. Waddell, which many believe to be a mere temporizing with the difficulties of the situation, and storing up greater evils in the future, ex-Governor William A. McCorkle, of West Virginia, defended the proposition to establish educational and property qualification tests applicable to both races alike. Thus instead of placing a premium upon education and thrift for the negro boy, and on ignorance and thriftlessness for the white boy as is done by the Mississippi law, a premium would be placed for the youth of both races upon knowledge and labor. In the interests of the poor white boy of the South it is believed that this premium upon intelligence and thrift at the polls is a prime necessity.

There was, however, no difference of opinion among any of those who spoke, that the present condition of the suffrage at the South is intolerable. One need not be surprised that Southern men resent the criticisms made upon their political methods by those living under conditions brought about by Tammany in New York, Quay in Pennsylvania and Hanna in Ohio, but when left to speak for themselves there is no uncertain ring in the Southern sentiment that demands relief from the present evils. The discussion but gave voice to the convictions of a large majority of the American people to-day, that the bestowal of the franchise upon the negro without regard to his qualifi-

cation for its intelligent exercise was a great blunder, if not a crime. In spite of the constitutional provisions for his exercise of the franchise, the domination of the white men by the negroes, however great the negro majorities may be in any community, will never be tolerated. In pleading for relief from this painful position, in which a law abiding people find themselves forced to oppose the Constitution by the demands made upon them for the preservation of their very civilization, Hon. Bourke Cochran proposing a repeal of the fifteenth amendment simply crystalized a fact in a popular phrase, when he declared that the amendment was a dead letter, and would forever continue so, "for it has been lynched."

"The Constitution has assigned him (the negro) to one place in our political system, public opinion has assigned him to another, and the position he occupies is that fixed by public opinion. * * * If it were possible to enforce a constitutional provision against the judgment of the State the fifteenth amendment would be in active operation today. All the powers of the Federal Government have been exercised to put it in force. * * * It is an extraordinary anomaly that the nullification of the Constitution has been accomplished, not through any spirit of insubordination to the Constitution itself, nor from any disloyalty to the government, nor from any disregard of the law, but from keen regard for the security of property and the safety of civilization. While arrayed against this constitutional provision, the Southern people would die in defence of the Constitution as a whole. They have succeeded in nullifying this provision by the approval and support of the opinion of the country; they would not have nullified it without it."

Whether public opinion has reached that stage where it is practical to propose the abolition of this historic amendment may well be questioned, but no one can read this appeal of the eloquent New Yorker to bring the actual and theoretical status into harmony, to relieve this loyal Constitution-loving people from the terrible moral incubus they

have borne so long, and this in the interests of both races, without feeling that the day that marks the repeal of this measure that has been stamped with the moral disapproval of the conscience of the nation, and has in practice proved worse than a failure, will be a new day of independence for the country.

3. It was noteworthy that while several of the speakers gave, in passing, statistics that seemed to imply the failure of the attempts to educate the negro, the cause of industrial education found practically unanimous acceptance. That the claims of this cause were presented by Dr. Hollis Burke Frissell, the successor of the lamented Gen. Armstrong at Hampton, and Dr. J. L. M. Curry, ex-Minister to Spain and agent of the Peabody and Slater funds, evidenced at once that the views presented were not the theories of empiricists, but of those who speak from a wider range of personal experience in this work than any two men in America to-day, with the possible exception of Booker T. Washington.

As an Alabamian, and representative in the first Confederate Congress, of which he and one other gentleman are the only survivors, Doctor Curry is in a position to speak with the utmost freedom and command the attention of the Southern people. A braver, franker or bolder exposition of the difficulties and duties of the times in relation to the race problem has perhaps never been made before any audience than is to be found in Doctor Curry's presentation of the needs of popular education in the South.

The neglected elements of the white population were not neglected in the discussions, and it is to be sincerely hoped that one result of the Conference will be the awakening of the people to the facts of the case with reference to the industrial and educational needs of the poor white boy of the South. The danger that faces the South to-day, is not of giving the negro too much of all that makes for his true well-being, but in neglecting to give the white boy equal industrial and educational opportunities.

3. It is a significant fact that no speaker of prominence

could be found in the whole South to advocate lynching. The two eminent speakers, who presented this aspect of the race problems in the South, Hon. Alex. C. King, of Georgia, and Hon. Clifton R. Breckinridge, of Arkansas, ex-Ambassador to Russia, laid chief emphasis, not upon the atrocity of lynchings, but upon the necessary legal remedies for this crime against law and order. Gen. Breckinridge brought out with striking force the political and social conditions at the South after the war, due to the reign of the carpet bagger, as furnishing the soil from whence has sprung this epidemic of mob violence. But the necessity for the exercise of law by the people themselves whatever the risks attending that exercise, has passed away with the restoration of law and order, and with it has passed the excuse for lynching. The two remedies proposed were a speedier trial of the accused, a limitation upon the privileges of securing continuance of trial on petty pretexts in all cases involving assaults upon the person of women, and the provisions for the taking of the testimony of the victim in the presence only of the Judge, the prisoner and the attorneys for the prosecution and defence.

5. The discussions on the religious work among the negroes developed the fact that in the judgment of the speakers this work is most effectively done when under the superintendence of white men.

The able paper read by Rev. D. Clay Lilly, of Tuscaloosa, Ala., was especially significant because of the fact that as Secretary of the Executive Committee on Colored Evangelization of the General Assembly of the Southern Presbyterian Church, Mr. Lilly has had exceptional opportunities for examining the results of the attempt of this church to establish an independent Negro Presbyterian Church. He showed that no one recognized the failure of this plan so thoroughly as did the negro Presbyterian preachers themselves.

The dissenting voice on this question was raised by the Roman Catholic Priest, Rev. J. R. Slattery, of St. Joseph's

Seminary, Baltimore. The work of this priest, however, has been conducted under circumstances so manifestly different from those that obtain throughout the South generally, that those who agreed with him even, must have felt that the theories presented needed yet to be put to the practical test. And in no other work is it more certainly true that an ounce of fact is worth a ton of theory.

It is a matter of some interest to note as characteristic of the training of Romish priests that the Right Rev. Father not merely misquoted the Scriptures, but based a portion of his argument on this misquotation.

He is authority for the statement that the race prejudice at Jerusalem in the days of Paul was greater than exists to-day between the white men and negroes in the South. Perhaps so, but the priest cites as proof of this statement that "Paul when he went up to Jerusalem to the celebrated first Council was on account of this race prejudice compelled to circumcise Titus the Greek!"

Those familiar with their Bibles will understand how astonished the great Apostle to the Gentiles would be to hear of this.

The papers presented on this subject by Rev. M. A. Guerry, of Sewanee, and Bishop Penick, of the African Mission, emphasized the importance of white leadership in a forceful way.

It has not been found possible in this brief review of some of the positions, that seem to have been crystalized by the discussions of the Conference, to give place to a consideration of several papers of more than usual ability. While many felt that the actual conditions of the negroes to-day did not warrant the pessimistic conclusions drawn by Dr. Paul B. Barringer, of the University of Virginia, in his paper on the "Sacrifice of a Race," it was universally admitted that the paper was one of the ablest and most scholarly presented at the Conference.

Taken as a whole perhaps few Conferences have ever been held in this country where there was such an absence of sensational features or where the papers read were uni-

formly of such a higher order. Audiences that at times taxed the seating capacity of the vast auditorium manifested an unusual interest and attention to the entire proceedings of the Conference. Not the least interested portion of the audience was the negroes themselves, several hundred of whom were in constant attendance upon its sessions, as orderly and attentive listeners.

It is safe to predict that the papers soon to be published by the Society in book form, will have a widespread influence in moulding public sentiment throughout the entire country.

Doubtless at the second Conference to be held in Montgomery in May, 1901, it will be possible to allow greater latitude in general discussions, and even also to provide for some formal expression of the judgment of the Conference concerning certain important phases of the problems discussed.

That the plans adopted for this first Conference were under the circumstances wise, and were in large measure responsible for its success, no one acquainted with the situation could question.

NEAL L. ANDERSON.

Montgomery, Ala.