

THE Union Seminary Magazine

VOL. XVII

FEBRUARY—MARCH, 1906

No. 3

THE CHILDREN IN THE HANDS OF THE ARMINIANS.

By REV. B. B. WARFIELD, D. D., LL. D.,

Professor in the Theological Seminary at Princeton.

Prof. Charles W. Rishell, of Boston University, has written a very interesting little book on the relation of little children to Christianity and to the Christian Church.* The object he has set before him is the very laudable one of pleading for the religious education of children. In order to give force to his pleading he argues the possibility of religion in children of the tenderest years. He insists on the importance for them of religious instruction and example. He demands of the church recognition of their church membership and provision for their care and development as children of God with the same right to the privileges of God's Church as other members. As he expresses it, he pleads with the Church "to count the children in, not out."

The significance of the book is that it emanates from Arminian circles and reasons from Arminian postulates. This is its significance; and this is its weakness. There is no other system of belief of widespread influence in the churches to which it is not a commonplace and mere matter of course that children are capable of religious life from their very earliest years, and ought to be recognized from their infancy as members of Christ's Church and brought up in its fold and under its fostering care. There is no other system of belief of widespread influence in the

**The Child as God's Child.* By Rev. Charles W. Rishell, Ph. D., Professor of Historical Theology in Boston University School of Theology. New York: Eaton & Mains. Cincinnati: Jennings & Graham (1904). Small 8vo. Pp. 181.

MISSIONARY ASPECTS OF OUR NEGRO POPULATION.

By REV. JAMES G. SNEDECOR.

*Secretary Presbyterian Committee of Colored Evangelization,
Tuscaloosa, Ala.*

The organized effort of the Southern Presbyterian Church for the moral and religious betterment of our negro population is truly missionary, and rests for its authority and obligation upon the example and command of our Lord. This being true, we are at once relieved of all doubt as to its expediency, and, if we do our best, from all responsibility for results. If the accounts of the negroes' unreliability, dishonesty, immorality and ignorance, which are daily repeated in every household are not wonderfully exaggerated, there is here upon our wayside a man woefully disabled by sin and circumstance. Whether we are to be neighbor unto him depends upon the measure of grace we have received. At each outbreak of crime on the part of the negro, or whenever the cook leaves before breakfast many good people are in despair, and resolve to do no more for the regeneration of the race.

The reading of missionary literature is recommended for such discouragement. In foreign fields it appears that Southern white men and women may be found dealing very patiently with wayward individuals belonging to races that are probably no more benighted than the negro, and who are certainly no more grateful for the attention. The degradation and lawlessness of the Chinese or the Mexican only emphasize our duty to him. As long as he is a foreigner goodly sums are cheerfully given for his enlightenment; but suppose nine millions of them should to-morrow take the place of the negroes! Add to their native vanity (equal now to that of the negro) thirty years of coddling, and one would see the generous sum now given for their salvation shrink to the pathetic sum now given to colored evangelization.

The missionary spirit that is now possessing our beloved church cannot surely overlook much this godless people at the back door. Even those who profess to find no sanction in Scripture for Foreign Missions must consistently find in this direction a splendid opportunity for their zeal in Home Missions. As Dr. S. M. Smith points out in his admirable sermon, "Am I My Brother's Keeper," lately published by the Assembly's Committee on Colored Evangelization, this work combines in a peculiar way the elements of both Home and Foreign Missions. "Consider," says he, "the incongruity of sending missionaries five thousand miles across the seas at tremendous expense and constant hazard of health, and even life, to contend with all the manifold difficulties and dangers of that strangest and most alien of all strange and alien lands, in order to preach the Gospel to the African there, while we are habitually neglecting ten million of these same Africans *here*. How grotesquely inconsistent it must appear when one reflects on it! In such connection there rings through my mind this challenge: 'If a Church love not the African whom it hath seen, how can it love the African whom it hath not seen?' If one cares not for the souls of the millions steeped in heathenism at our very doors, how can he care for those same heathen on the opposite side of the earth?"

While the negroes were owned by the superior race, this missionary obligation was recognized by all Christian masters, and the sadly lessening number of old-time honest and upright darkeys proclaims the neglect of modern employers. There are to be no successors of these humble, God-fearing, old colored people. The system that produced them is extinct. Formerly the negro had few rights, but many privileges; now he has every right, but few privileges. Among the privileges he once enjoyed was the attendance at the same church with the white man and of hearing the gospel preached with true emphasis upon the life. Commenting upon the social and religious influences of the old regime Dr. Dickerman declares that "to share in such a domestic life, to grow up from infancy under the eye of such superiors, and in the companionship of their children, could bring even to the slave a fineness of sensibility, a moral tone and an intelligence that do not rise spontaneously in any character."

Not only were individuals at work on this great missionary

problem, but the earlier declarations of the church on the subject show a deep appreciation of the opportunity. At the meeting of the General Assembly in Columbia, S. C., May, 1863, the report on domestic missions, written by the great and good Wilson, gave special attention to the religious needs of the negroes. We quote: "There are undoubtedly indications that the mind of the South, out of the church as well as in it, is impressed with the obligation to provide more effectively for the spiritual wants of this population of the ignorant and needy, who have been placed Providentially among us and under our control. . . . The foreign missionary problem is here reversed. Instead of having to send missionaries to the heathen, they are brought to our doors, thus affording the opportunity of doing a foreign missionary work on a gigantic scale, and under the most favorable auspices—a work altogether unique and which the church in any part of the world might covet. The Lord in this particular hath set before us an open door; let us not fail to enter it."

Neither the emancipation of the slaves, the chaos of affairs following the downfall of the Confederacy, nor the impoverished condition of the country, checked the missionary ardor of our fathers in the church on this subject. The Assembly was unable to meet in 1865 until December, and at Macon the following fine declaration was made: "That we solemnly admonish and enjoin upon all our ministers, churches and people not in any wise to intermit their labors for the religious instruction of the colored people in our land. Whilst the change in the legal and domestic relations of this class does not release the church from its obligation to seek their moral and spiritual welfare; their helpless condition and their greater exposure to temptation, leading to vice, irreligion and ruin, both temporal and eternal, which result from that change, make the strongest appeal to our Christian sympathies, and demand redoubled diligence in supplying them with the saving ordinances of the gospel." There are few finer things in history than the foregoing expression of unselfish devotion to the spiritual needs of the negro, made by his former master, who were now impoverished and ruined. It displays an unconquerable missionary spirit.

The question which I now wish to raise is, How have we, the children of these dauntless men, lost this deep sense of respon-

sibility for the moral welfare of the negro? Many answers have been proposed: Prejudice, scepticism as to results, etc., but the true answer is to be found not so much in present conditions as in past history. The missionary spirit of 1865 faced a simple proposition—at least on its religious side. Grandly ignoring the changed relationship which the negro would henceforth sustain to them, our Christian leaders prepared at once to continue with redoubled diligence the supplying of his religious needs. Undoubtedly this great missionary undertaking would have been pushed forward with ever increasing effort, and it is an attractive theme to surmise the happy results of such a wise and magnanimous campaign against ignorance and helplessness. If the two parties most involved in this tremendous struggle for readjustment had been left to work out their social and religious salvation, guided by Christian impulses and urged by a common industrial interest, the Southern States would probably to-day have possessed the happiest and most industrious peasantry in the world.

Reconstruction, however, was substituted for readjustment. The misguided government undertook to make the child a man by enactment—to perform a miracle without divine power, and the result, at first farcical, was turned by wicked men into an awful tragedy. From that day to this the unchristian and unnecessary hiatus between the races has been widening by the action of many converging influences, which we have neither space nor motive for discussing here. Suffice it to say that race antipathy, inflamed unnaturally by the artificial relationships established by law; misunderstandings engendered by silly friends; perverted methods introduced by sentimental reformers, and continuing fatuous failure to rectify past mistakes, are all contributing to negative any appeals made to the stronger race to bear the infirmities of the weak.

Were the question one simply of expediency, then we might be content to drift along toward a future which seems to be ever darkening with hatred and mistrust. But such a policy is unbecoming the Christian. He prays that Christ's kingdom may come. He will belie the prayer if he does not become instant in season and out of season with hand and heart to cure the leper of his country. Surely there is much that can be appealed to in the Christian heart of the South, and we may yet come

back to the sense of Christian responsibility exhibited by the men of '65.

The measures adopted by the General Assembly with reference to co-operation by the Presbyterians of the country in various lines of missionary and educational effort ought to find among the negroes a most inviting field. The way has been prepared for this by the discovery that there is in the South among Christian people a real desire to help the colored man, and an apprehension all along the line that the matter has been already sadly neglected. True, there is impatience and discouragement; but if the follies of the past could be eliminated and if practical methods could be agreed upon, hopeful liberty could be quickly evoked. In China, Japan, and Brazil Christians pool their spiritual assets, and form limited partnerships for carrying on the business of a common Master. Nowhere is unity of spirit and methods more needed than in the missionary problem before us.

Before the way shall have been thoroughly prepared for harmonious action another discovery remains to be made. It must be realized by the good people who from a distance are so liberally supporting religious and educational work among the negroes that in spite of their best intentions the effect of their efforts has been to widen the chasm of misunderstanding and prejudice which has been growing between the races since Reconstruction days. They have had an eye single to the negro. A larger vision of their duty would have embraced the people with whom, as well as the conditions under which, they were preparing the negro to live. Impatience and prejudice has not been the attitude of only the Southern people. But all parties are now seeing more broadly, and judging more impartially. The recent rebellion of colored students at Talladega College, because they were unwilling to be directed by a Southern white man, the other members of the faculty being Northern people, was a symptom of a widespread malady. The president of the college, acting upon common principles of the fitness of things, stood firm; and Dr. Beard and Dr. Cooper, up in New York, at the head of the American Missionary Association, stood squarely for the sensible thing. They declared that prejudice was at the bottom of the difficulty, and prejudice against a good white man was as foolish as prejudice against a good negro. This decision is encouraging; and we believe the incident will be enlightening. When some

deeper appreciation of the situation becomes general among the Northern agencies now working with splendid enthusiasm for the uplift of the negro, the way will be opened for a stronger appeal to our own people, and a broader foundation laid for a wise and permanent missionary work in this behalf.

Meanwhile we must not be indifferent or ungracious. The call for volunteers for this service from the ranks of our young men is imperative and divine. Shall we forget the interpretation of the Providence that brought the African here which our fathers made? If these people are human, they come within the range of our Master's loving command. Shall religion and education meet in the negro their Waterloo! If so, then there has been failure on the part of the friends of the gospel.

Especially inviting just now is the line of work in city slums among a class whose absolute needs seems to have evoked little effort. Rev. John Little, the apostle of the black slums of Louisville, has shown a true missionary spirit. There was far more glory for him in Africa; but as he saw the need he determined to be neighbor to the man fallen in his very path. Can the divine sanction upon his work be for a moment doubted. Yet it has been the writer's experience to see many noble young men refuse urgent calls to this work. The pastor of a large and wealthy church in a Southern city is seeking for such a missionary. If our young men consult with flesh and blood, he will seek in vain.