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I.—LITERARY.

A BRIEF SKETCH OF THE MISSIONS OF THE SOUTHERN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH.

Our Church has been engaged in Foreign Mission work since 1866. The history of her missionary endeavor is, therefore, short. It is like the history of the Church herself as an independent organization. But the history of the Presbyterian Church South, albeit her career is so short, has many lessons for the Churches of the Lord Jesus Christ throughout the Earth; and the history of her efforts to preach the Gospel among heathen peoples should be regarded by herself at least as of great practical importance as well as of deep interest.

We have undertaken in another place to give a compendious account of the Foreign Missionary effort of our Church.* But our limits in that place forbade our giving any particular and detailed account of the several Missions which the Church has planted.

Accordingly it is proposed in the present paper to sketch in a meagre way the planting and progress of these several missions. We cannot promise in the following pages any of that life which could have been infused into the history had we had access to such letters of missionaries as must be stored in our Committee's rooms, or must be in the possession of their more familiar personal friends. We must, also, confess that, in many instances, the official reports of our Committee and such letters from missionaries, as we have been able to get at through their publication, have not sufficed to give that exact information which was desired; so that we have had to conten-

*See Southern Presbyterians, pp. 362-371. (In American Church History Series.)

KNOWING GOD: A SERMON.

By REV. PEYTON H. HOGE, D. D.

John xvii, 25. O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee: but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me.

During the past season the scientific world has lost one of its greatest masters; a man beloved by his friends, respected by his opponents, honored by his country, and idolized by his followers; a man whose direct contributions to natural science were great, but whose work in popularizing science was, perhaps, greater. But with all these claims to distinction, it is probable that Prof. Huxley will be chiefly remembered as the author of one word, and the exponent of the philosophy which that word represents. Objecting to the term infidel as carrying with it opprobriums, he coined for himself and his followers the term Agnostic, as descriptive of their attitude towards the great questions of God and eternity and the spiritual life. They would not say, "There is no God," but only, "He is unrevealed." They would not deny the existence of a great Cause or Power—with a capital letter—but His (or Its) nature and attributes are unknown. They would not deny the existence of a future life, but only that we know anything about it. Hence the name—affirming nothing with regard to these questions but ignorance. The Agnostic is simply the Know-nothing of the religious world.

And now the great Agnostic is dead, and without intruding into the circle of private grief, or peering beyond the veil to follow the destinies of a soul, we may respectfully inquire, What are the thoughts that console and sustain the Agnostic in view of death, or that comfort those who weep around his bier? What were his own thoughts in view of death, we do not know, but we may gather those of his friends from the epitaph upon his tomb:

"And if there be no meeting past the grave,
If all is darkness, silence, yet 'tis rest,
Be not afraid ye waiting hearts that weep,
For God still giveth His beloved sleep,
And if an endless sleep, He wills so best."

Meagre as is the consolation afforded by these lines, I may remark that they are thoroughly inconsistent with the Agnos-

tic position. They affirm that God is ; that He has beloved ones upon whom He bestows blessings ; and that what He wills is best ; all truths, but truths that the Agnostic has no right to know. Yet after borrowing what they can from the Word of God which they reject, how poor still is the consolation compared with the Christian's hope in the words of his Master : "I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself ; that where I am, there ye may be also."

But if Christianity is to maintain its place against Agnosticism, it will not be because of the superior consolations it affords, but because of its *truth*. Poor as this life would be, and dark as the outlook upon the future might be, without these consolations, the world will have to learn to get along without them, and aching hearts must ache unrelieved, and weeping eyes must weep on, unless the hopes of the gospel are more than empty hopes, and its consolations are based upon eternal realities.

Let us look, then, at these words of *our* Masters, and see what He says about knowing God : "O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee ; but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me."

Now, in the first place, day begins to break about us when we hear him say, *The world hath not known thee*. A great many good people are very much troubled by the skepticism of the learned of the world. They do not know the grounds of their unbelief ; they cannot follow their arguments ; but they are rendered uncomfortable in their own faith by the fact that those whose researches have been so much profounder, whose knowledge upon most subjects is so much more extensive, and whose mental endowments are so much greater, reject the truths that are so dear to them. Then there is a vast unthinking crowd, who never study these subjects themselves, and are content to follow in the wake of a great name. The sum of their faith is about this : "Mr. Huxley don't know, don't you know, and how can we know ?" But just here come in the words of the Great Teacher, and a single puncture lets all the wind out of this vaunted argument : *the world hath not known thee*. If Mr. Huxley says that human philosophy cannot know God, it is just what Jesus Christ said before him. If the researches and investigations of a mere human philosophy do not reveal the nature of God, it is but another confession of

failure in answer to the world-old challenge, "Canst thou by searching find out God?"* If the wisdom of the nineteenth century does not know God, it but joins hands with the first century, of which the Apostle affirmed that "the world by wisdom know not God."† If the world is Agnostic to-day, it is only because the world must always be Agnostic so long as it is true that "the natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."‡

The philosophy of the world is Agnostic because it searches for God by the wrong method. Would the chemist try to determine the composition of a fixed star by the same methods that he uses to analyse the ore that he holds in his hand? God cannot be weighed in the balances of material science. He cannot be analysed in its crucible. He eludes the tests that are applied to material phenomena. Other processes and other criteria must be used, if the world is to know God. "*Oh righteous Father, the world hath not known thee.*"

And over against the world's agnosticism, the Master puts his own knowledge: "The world hath not known thee; *but I have known thee.*" The life of Jesus Christ was preeminently the life of one who claimed to know God. His first recorded words are, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business;"|| his last, "Father, into thy hands I commed my spirit."§ The works that he did were what he had seen the Father do,¶ and the words that he spoke were what the Father commanded.** He came not to do his own but his Father's will;†† the doing of it was meat to him when hungry,‡‡ and it controlled his own will in his hour of bitterest anguish;||| to the glory of his Father's name, he offered himself a willing sacrifice. §§

The most characteristic feature of Jesus Christ's knowledge of God is that which is set forth in the name, Father. The doctrine of the Fatherhood of God is not original with Jesus as is often asserted by those who ought to know better.¶¶ But he gave to it a depth and fulness and tenderness of meaning, and a familiarity in our thoughts and upon our lips, that it never had before. We could trust him to provide for all our

* Job xi:7. † I Cor. i:21. ‡ I Cor. ii:14. || Luke ii:49. § Luke xxiii:4-6. ¶ John v:19. ** John xii:49. †† Job vi:38. ‡‡ Job iv:34. ||| Matt. xxvi:39-42. §§ John xii:27-28. ¶¶ cf. Ps. lxxviii:5; ciii:13; Is. ix:6; lxiii:16; lxiv:8; Jer. iii:19; Mal. i:6; ii:10.

wants; he fed the ravens and clothed the lilies; how much more his children?* We need fear no danger; not a sparrow fell to the ground without his will, and we are of more value than many sparrows.† He watched over our minutest concerns; the very hairs of our heads were all numbered.‡ We could come to him with our wants, and say, "Our Father which art in heaven;"§ and he set the example for us, by spending whole nights in prayer and communion with him.||

But we only learn the fulness of his conception of God's Fatherhood, when we study his doctrine of redemption. God's children had wandered from their Father's house, and forfeited their inheritance and sonship.¶ But the Father's heart still yearned over them.** He loved them so that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believed in him should not perish but have eternal life.†† This is the morrow of Christ's doctrine of God. And yet there are many who accept with complacency his doctrine of God's Fatherhood, who find the doctrine of the cross an offence.

Recently in a New York court of justice there was an application for a writ of ejectment against a tenant who had not paid his rent. When the defendant's name was called, a little girl of eight years of age, arose and answered. "Who are you?" said the judge. "Mr. Swartzman's daughter." "And where is your father?" "He is sick." "And your mother?" "She is sick, too." "Have you no brothers or sisters?" "They are all younger than me." "Have you the money to pay the rent?" "No, father has been sick so long he could not earn it." Now, here was a predicament for an honorable judge. On the one hand the majesty of the law must be maintained. The rights of property must be observed. Goldstein, the owner, demanded his money and had a right to it. On the other hand, there was that little girl! The judge was a man, as well as a judge—a father, most likely, as well as a man. Could he launch the stern edict of the law against that helpless child that stood before him? The law says one thing, humanity another, and just the opposite thing. What is a judge, who is also a man, to do? Why, bring in an expedient outside of law to satisfy both law and humanity. He pauses a few moments, and then says to the clerk, "Julius, pass the hat." And the hat was passed—to officers of the court, to attorneys, witness and spec-

* Luke xii:24-27. † Matt. x:29-31. ‡ *ibid.* vs. 30. § Matt. vi:9. || Luke vi:12. ¶ Luke xv:13. ** *ibid.* vss. 20-24. †† John iii:16.

tators—and when it was returned there was enough to pay Goldstein's claim, and a little surplus was placed in the hand of the grateful child. The law was satisfied, and yet mercy had free course.

God's justice, by a decree eternal and immutable as the throne of His righteousness, has sworn, "The soul that sinneth it shall die." Its demand is inexorable, because it is the foundation of the moral order of the universe. When executed against the angels who sinned in the full light of heaven, all heaven pronounced it right. But here stands before the bar man in his helplessness, and God's heart yearns over him. Justice demands his death, but love and mercy plead for his life. It is the heart of a Father yearning over an erring son. Shall justice have its course? No, justice must be satisfied by an expedient outside of law. God can call on none to help, but His own arm brings salvation. Out of the infinite riches of His boundless store, He gives His best gift. He so loved the world as to give His only begotten Son; and He, offering Himself a willing sacrifice, gives His life a ransom for many.* This is God's great plan of redemption according to the teaching of Jesus Christ, that the exiled children in rebellion against His law may be restored to their Father's heart and home.

What shall we say, then, of Jesus' revelation of God? He claimed to know God, and to have come from God that He might reveal Him unto us. Was it the dream of an enthusiast, or the revelation of truth? He does not leave that question uncovered: "The world hath not known thee: but I have known thee, *and these have known that thou hast sent me.*" How did the disciples, and how may we, know that Jesus Christ came from God, so that we may accept his claim to know and reveal God, as true?

Let us hear their testimony—their testimony as to the grounds of their belief that Jesus came from God.

One of them says: "This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory; and his disciples believed on him."† In this statement and in many others they tell us that it was his miracles that convinced them of the truth of his claims, and to these miracles Jesus himself confidently appeals.‡ The record of these miracles—surpassing not only all that was possible by natural means in the first century, but equally transcending all the achievements of the

* Matt. xx:28. † John ii, 11. ‡ John v, 36.

science of our own day—received from credible, honest witnesses, who witnessed to their truth with their lives, will weigh greatly with ingenuous minds in all ages, even if it does not bring the freshness of evidence that the actual works would bring to those who saw them. But there is an element in these works the force of which is not lost by the lapse of centuries. They were not merely miracles of power but miracles of grace. It is the wonderful consistency of these works with the claims and mission of Jesus Christ that appeals to our hearts as freshly to-day as to the multitudes that thronged him in Galilee. When he turned the water into wine, how is it that it, at once, brings in the new wine of the kingdom, and that old forms are seen to be inadequate to contain the new life that bursts forth in its fresh vitality with the gospel of fellowship and helpfulness and joy? How is it that the words that stilled the stormy waves of Galilee speak peace to troubled hearts to-day? How is it that the spiritually maimed and halt and paralytic feel heart and hope revive at the record of his healing, and that the spiritually blind feel the touch of the Healer opening their eyes as they read of the beggar by the wayside and the blind man of Jerusalem? It is because the miracles of Jesus Christ are differentiated from all other alleged miracles by their *naturalness*. We feel that if One came from God this is just what he ought to do. His miracles are not wonders to make us stare, they are acts of grace that reveal to us the heart of God. They seem a part of him, without which he would be incomplete. They seem as natural and essential a part of Jesus as light is to the sun or perfume to the rose.

Again, on another occasion, Jesus was grieved at the apostasy of many of his followers, and turning to the Twelve, he said, "Will ye also go away?" Then it was that Peter answered, "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life."* This is his testimony that it was the *words* of Jesus that were another proof to them of his Divine claims. They had sunk down into their hearts. They had awakened deep echoes in their souls. In response to his words a new life, a new nature had vibrated within them, and they knew that this life was from God. Now whatever any one may think of the miracles of Christ, no one doubts that he spoke substantially the words that are attributed to him. A scientific

* John vi.68.

age will not make the blunder of supposing a four-fold authorship for words of such sweep and power, that for *one* to have spoke them is the miracle of the ages. So we can take his words and sit at his feet just as the disciples did of old, missing only the music of his voice and the benignity of his countenance. And as we sit before him, do not *we* bear him witness and wonder at the gracious words that proceed out of his mouth? * Do not we testify, "Never man spake like this man?" † Do not our hearts burn within us as he talks with us by the way, ‡ and might not his disciples well chide themselves that their eyes had been holden that they should not know him? § He came to bear witness of the truth and all who are of the truth came unto him. || His sheep hear his voice and follow him. ¶

Once more: the disciple who entered most deeply into the contemplation of the life and character of Jesus Christ, declares, "We beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father." ** They could not live in the light of that life without seeing in him the son of righteousness. They could not contemplate that character without seeing in it a glory that was not of earth. The closer the contact between their littleness and his greatness, between their sinfulness and his holiness, between their selfishness and his infinite self-sacrifice, the more they were awed into the conviction that Peter voiced when he said, "Thou art the Christ the Son of the living God," †† or that John expressed in the preface to his gospel. No wonder there was a gentle reproach in the words of Jesus to Philip: "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father, and how sayest thou, shew us the Father." †‡ And if we bring our lives into comparison with his life, if we contemplate his character as it shines in his works and words, we too must exclaim with doubting Thomas, "My Lord and my God," and receive the benediction pronounced upon those who have not seen and yet have believed. §§

It is after all this personal revelation of Christ to the soul that puts the believer, however humble, beyond the reach of the doubt of the Agnostic or the subtle attacks of the infidel. Whether able or not to answer the arguments of the adver-

* Luke iv:22. † John vii:46. ‡ Luke xxiv:32. § Ibid. cf. vs. 16.
 || John xviii, 37. ¶ John x, 27. ** John i, 14. †† Matt. xvi, 16.
 †‡ John xiv, 9. §§ John xx, 28-29.

sary he can repel his assaults as did the blind man at Jerusalem, "One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now, I see."* We can rest our hearts upon the words of Jesus: "O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee; but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me."



* John ix, 25.