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ARTICLE VIII.

CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA.

BY THE REV. JAMES LINDSAY, D.D., IRVINE, SCOTLAND.

CLEMENT of Alexandria will surely come to his own. Messrs. Williams and Norgate issued last spring the two-volumed work on Clement by Rev. R. B. Tollinton, B.D., Rector of Tendring, as "a Study in Christian Liberalism." The work deals with Clement, his times and contemporaries; with his views on Paganism, Marriage, and Property; on the Logos, the Incarnation, and Gnosticism; on the Church, the Sacraments, and the Scriptures. Messrs. Blackwood and Sons have now issued a volume on "Clement of Alexandria," by Professor John Patrick, which will be useful to students who have made no study of this great Alexandrine Father.¹ My remarks in this paper must be confined to the work of Dr. Patrick alone. Dr. Patrick has done well to issue this work, for his career, so far as authorship is concerned, has fallen greatly short of expectations. It is the only piece of work he has published since he became a professor in 1898; in theological literature, as represented in Journals, his name is absolutely unknown. A good deal of industry and scholarship — the latter at times too much of the mechanical order — have gone to the making of the work. Dr. Patrick shares the common weakness of the monographist, that of

¹ *Clement of Alexandria. (The Croall Lecture for 1899-1900.)* By John Patrick, D.D., Professor of Biblical Criticism and Biblical Antiquities, University of Edinburgh. Pp. viii, 329. Edinburgh and London: Messrs. William Blackwood and Sons. 1914. 7s. 6d., *net*.

magnifying the subject because he has taken it up, and of interpreting everything relative to it in the most favorable light possible. But Clement has always stood out as a noble and attractive figure, and, as such, has no need of exaggeration. One of the serious mistakes of Professor Patrick's work is the tendency to overrate the importance of Clement. He allows himself to forget, in taking Clement so seriously as the mouthpiece of Greek thought, that Origen and Athanasius followed. What great meaning or sense is there in Dr. Patrick's insistences that the Church of to-day should look back to Clement for principles and guidance, when he was only one of the earlier Greek Fathers, with no thought-out theory of the Trinity, or of the Person of Christ, or of the Atonement? Dr. Patrick himself admits that Clement did not find it "necessary to formulate any theory of the Atonement" (p. 119), nor any "consistent and harmonious" doctrine of the Person and Work of Christ (p. 99). The Church of to-day is to get her light from a writer whose mind was in a state of theological crudeness or fluidity or inchoateness! Dr. Patrick has evidently been led to an undue magnifying of Clement by the influence of writers like Professor Allen, whose "Continuity of Christian Thought" is among his authorities. But he should have perceived that Allen's work is — not at this point alone — one-sided, though able, and, indeed, on Clement's atonement position Dr. Patrick has felt the need to modify, mildly but definitely, the position of Professor Allen, who had bluntly declared that "sacrificial expiation" for sin "finds no place in Clement's view of redemption." Allen's mistake lay in not taking a widened basis for study of the Patristic view, as was done, for example, by an Anglican writer — not in Dr. Patrick's list — who occupied like ground with Allen's patristic preferences, but who yet

sensibly took in all the Early Fathers, including Athanasius and Augustine. Thus found he no great difference between these two, "the restoration of our fallen nature by the Incarnation" being, in his view, "characteristic of the whole of the Patristic theology." The same writer was able to say that "any view of Christ's redeeming work which finds it in His *life*, rather than in His Death, is out of harmony with the Creeds and with Scripture." But another Anglican theologian has more precisely said that "we cannot ignore the necessity of death as the appointed form which the obedience took. Had he not obeyed, He would not have atoned; but had He not died, the obedience would have lacked just that element which made it an atonement for sin." Allen's view ill consorts with this, for he says there is, for Clement, "no re-adjustment or restoration of a broken relationship," and Dr. Patrick allows that, in Clement, the work of Christ as Mediator "is not clearly related to His death" (p. 119).

Professor Patrick's plan, in his half-dozen lectures, is to present the teaching of Clement in sum, by piecing together statements of Clement taken from his various works, the references to which are rather too plentifully — not to be needlessly disfiguring — shaken from Dr. Patrick's theological pepper-box at the bottom of the pages. The method has its uses, and may sometimes be advantageously employed. But it is, nevertheless, the obsolete method of the older systematic theologies, and it has obvious drawbacks in a case like that of Clement. A more modern method of studying a writer who is claimed to be "primarily modern" (p. 96) — a plan more in keeping with modern genetic methods — would at least not have deluded the student into thinking Clement a more systematic thinker than he was. This is the more needful when we find Dr. Patrick using phrases about

the "stately symmetry" (p. 96) of system, and Clement's "system of thought" (p. 33), for the senses are obvious in which the "system" is much more Dr. Patrick's than Clement's. Then the student would have seen how, as a French scholar has remarked, Clement was leading his reader from paganism to belief, in the "Protrepticus"; how, in the "Pædagogus," the reader was being drawn on from belief to discipline; and how, in the "Stromateis," he was being conducted from discipline to gnosis. Each of these works admits of a distinctive analysis and of fruitful treatment, nor should the significant fact be escaped that their teachings correspond to the three stages of Neo-Platonism, namely, purification, initiation, and vision.

The first lecture is a general one on "Clement and his Writings." On page 32, the first "Christian theory of the universe," the first "Christian philosophy of history," and the first "Christian code of ethics," are all claimed for Clement. But on the previous page (p. 31), Dr. Patrick had already modified the claim for Clement's philosophy, as a theory of the universe, into "only" a "philosophy of life." And people with more adequate ideas of the requirements of a "philosophy of history" have usually reserved this particular primacy for Augustine. The claim for the first Christian code of Ethics appears also strong, and too suggestive of something more ordered and systematic than is to be found in the material for an ethic, which is all that is really furnished by Clement. But, having made this bold threefold claim, the monographist goes on to water it away in a series of necessary but damaging deductions, none too strongly expressed. The worst thing is, that the student should have claims of this kind made without any historical sense — without any explicit relation to the work of Justin before or Ori-

gen after. Must a monographist be the only human being who does not look before and after? One may rejoice in Clement as much as Dr. Patrick does, without caring to abandon all sense of historic perspective. "Nothing," says our author (p. 33), "can take from Clement the glory of having been the first Christian teacher to find a place in his system of thought for all forms of truth"; true, and granted; but that fine eclecticism is a very different claim from that of making a brand new philosophy of the universe. Dr. Patrick's emphasis here on Clement's "system of thought" is a way of restoring what he had just been at pains to water away. One incidental injustice to Clement of all this tendency is, that Dr. Patrick nowhere brings out how dear Clement has been to Humanism, for his literary qualities, his atticism, his candor, and his erudition, though the last point is dealt with in a theological connection. This is said without troubling about those early critics who regarded Clement as a rhetorician lacking in clearness, order, and sobriety, in his writing. But these humanistic aspects would not have furthered the systematizing theory.

The second lecture, on "The Relation of Christianity to Hellenic Culture and Philosophy," is clearly overweighted in its title, which should have taken some more limited and less pompous form. "Hellenic Culture and Philosophy" is a much broader and richer thing than we have here, for the chapter is narrowly confined to the culture and philosophizing of Clement alone.

The third lecture, on "The Nature and Attributes of God," begins by saying that "to have a right conception of God in Himself, and in His relation to the universe and to man, is the essential basis not only of Christian thought but of *all thought whatsoever*." The italics are mine. One would

like to know how those distinguished philosophic thinkers of our time, who profess downright atheism, would regard this statement. Would they take it as a purely gratuitous Christian dogmatism, or would they flout it as for them sheer nonsense? It seems, in any case, a most unfortunate form of expression, as it stands, without explication of any sort. This I say, although there is hardly any part of Dr. Patrick's work with which I am in more entire agreement than his general positions on the postulation of God. These, however, are theological commonplaces, and need not be dwelt upon. But when, at the close of the chapter, Dr. Patrick talks of Clement "leading us to think of the justice of One who is good, rather than of the goodness of One who is just," he does not seem to me to realize how (theologically) unscientific is his nicely calculated less or more. For he ought surely to know enough scientific theology to be aware that the attributes of God are held to exist, each of them—but not separately, of course—in Him in illimitable perfection. Such writing is, in fact, too anthropomorphic in its tone and flavor. When Dr. Patrick speaks of Clement being "in harmony with a strong current of thought in our own time," in relating sin in its deserts to the "goodness" rather than the "sovereignty" of God, he ought to have done something better than leave "goodness" and "sovereignty" in bare and bald antithesis. For crude and uncritical are both terms of the antithesis, as it stands, and the higher thought of our time has richer moulds than either for its conception of Deity. No serious thinker to-day but would flout the un-ethicized conception of bare, unrelieved "sovereignty," and none but would equally reject an unsifted "goodness." The ethical character and necessities of the "goodness" must be inquired into, in the interests of the "goodness" itself. The more so, that this attribute is

just the one around which theistic difficulties have most clustered. The sentence on page 96 of this chapter would become correct English if "as" were omitted before "the central principle."

The fourth lecture is occupied with "The Person and Work of Christ." Neither in this chapter, nor in the one which follows it on "The Ethics of Clement," does Dr. Patrick deal, with a sufficiently firm hand, with those passages in the "Stromateis" which extravagantly claim for the Gnostic form of knowledge that its subject is himself a God in a certain sense, and acts in as passionless a way as a God would. Such a code of Gnostic perfection, it ought to be plainly said, is one for which the truth that "if we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us," does not exist. Dr. Patrick's feeble mode of handling the subject is seen in "may be" forms of expression, as on page 96, where it is said, "it may be that he is not free from the imperfect grasp of the sin of man, etc." His "imperfect grasp" is not a "may be" at all, but an obvious truth for any mind free and able to form a firm judgment. It is a decidedly curious kind of theological thinking which infers "from the imperfect grasp of the sin of man" that "his theology" thereby "gains in warmth and life." If an "imperfect grasp" of sin can bring the church of to-day "warmth and life," she can have these in the naturalistic tendencies of our time, without taking the trouble to go back to Clement. One had always supposed that it was in a complete grasp of sin and redeeming Love that "warmth and life" were gained for the theology of a sinning world.

The relations of faith and knowledge are fully dealt with by Dr. Patrick, and their early treatment by Clement was meritorious. They are "indissolubly related" in Clement,

says Dr. Patrick, but their treatment is "fluctuating." A recent writer, without being divergent from Professor Patrick's view, helpfully expresses the matter in these terms, while disdaining Clement's "philosophy as a whole":—"It is clear from his writings that by faith he meant a kind of conviction falling short, of demonstration or immediate intellectual insight, and dependent in part upon the state of the will and the heart. Clement did not disparage knowledge in the interests of faith; faith was to him a more elementary kind of knowledge resting largely upon moral conviction, and the foundation of that higher state of intellectual apprehension which he called Gnosis." He adds that, "properly considered, faith is, or, rather includes, a particular kind or stage of knowledge, and is not a totally different and even opposite state of mind," a fact "recognized by many, if not most, of the great Christian thinkers." What our author says on page 169 of the relation of Clement's moral ideal to the content of Stoicism is much too vague and unexplicated to be satisfactory: readers should supplement it by turning to works like that of Professor Vernon Arnold on "Roman Stoicism," in whose last chapter the view of Winckler is referred to, in which (it should at least be known) Stoicism is even regarded as "a root of Christianity," not merely, as with Dr. Patrick, "discordant and antagonistic" (p. 169).

On the sixth lecture, on "Scripture, its Nature, Interpretation, and Extent," there is no need to dwell. I will only remark that the question on the Acts of the Apostles (p. 224) was already discussed by the Rev. W. E. Barnes, B.D., of Cambridge, from the like standpoint, in an article in *The Thinker*, so far back as 1895. More, however, might be said upon the chapter.

Passing over several Appendices, we must notice the Bibli-
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ography, which appears pretty full, but is not very satisfactory. As to works on Clement generally, what good is there in chronicling works like Kaye's of 1835, while so many unnoticed treatments of much more recent date and greater importance rise in one's recollections? The references to Histories of Doctrine are scanty, and one misses items of great importance, German and other. Nor are the Dictionary and Encyclopædic references complete enough. The name of Pressensé is wrongly spelt. The references on literary questions are inadequate.

In the next section, on Theology and Philosophy, we again have the older stereotyped literature given, although little significant use has been made of it in the text. The astounding thing is, that not one English or American reference is given.

Thought on "the Nature and Attributes of God" has evidently been in so bad a way that no references are given for that chapter.

The next section therefore deals with the "Person and Work of Christ." The older literature is, as before, represented, with a very few recent references. Again the astonishing fact meets us that not a single British or American reference is given, with the solitary exception of the *BIBLIOTHECA SACRA*, 1888. The date of the latest item is 1902. Has thought been dormant for twelve years?

The section on "Ethical Teaching of Clement" refers to the Histories of Christian Ethics, but is far too meager in names quoted. British and American references are again wanting. The date of the latest item is 1903: ethical thought has slumbered for eleven years, it would appear.

The section on "Faith and Gnosis" is very meager in its authorities. Dr. Patrick has actually discovered one English book to close with — a rather slight one, be it said.

The section on "Scripture, its Nature, Interpretation, and Extent," is very like the last ones, the date of its latest item being 1897. So interpretation has hibernated for seventeen years!

I do not profess to understand how Dr. Patrick could be content to issue such a work, without a concluding lecture, showing how Clement influenced subsequent theological thought. This was obviously necessary, in view of the claims set up by Dr. Patrick for Clement as a systematic thinker, and the more so, that it was anciently averred that Clement's influence was a nullity. But, as we have seen, it is not the only point on which he has been too easily satisfied. It must not be thought, because I have been occupied mainly with matters of criticism, that the defects in knowledge and judgment keep the work from being an interesting, useful, and creditable one. I have years ago complained of the totally inadequate appreciation of the work of the early Apologists by the thought of our time, and in that I heartily concur with Professor Patrick, so far as the desire to do justice to Clement is concerned. His work has an excellent Index. It is handsomely produced by the publishers, as might be expected from a publishing firm the dignity of whose methods is not behind their efficiency.