

Griffin's History

Chapter VIII

MISSIONISM IN THE WEST INDIES

The following account of Christianity in Jamaica, is taken from a letter written by Rev. Jacob Weston, and published in the Utica Baptist Register, N. Y., a New School paper—and republished in the Advocate and Monitor, N. Y., an Old School paper, from which we take it, and the editors comment:

"But I proceed to state a little more definitely the Leadership System. Nearly every estate has a man called a leader, generally appointed by the missionary, who conducts the meetings held by the people on his estate.

"It is the leader's duty to induce persons to be set off. When he finds one willing, such person is brought into the class— room and assigned to a particular seat, when after some heathenish ceremonies, the candidate is made to kneel and repeat over a short prayer, which the leader puts, word by word, into his mouth. After this the leader takes him by the hand, saying, 'In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, I raise you to newness of life.' They are now termed by the missionaries, inquirers, and receive an inquirer ticket. And both missionaries and people believe, or pretend to believe, that when a person is thus set off by the leader, he is made a new creature, or born again. After being set off, the candidate is instructed in a round of questions and answers similar to the lectures in the Masonic Lodge. The leader at the first puts the questions, and gives the answers.

"When it is supposed the candidate can answer the questions expertly, if he please the leader and give him sufficient money, he is taken to the Missionary in these words: 'Minister, here are some fit to be baptized, I give them good character.' The Missionary then questions them as he pleases. But here let me remark that the Missionary asks the same questions as are asked in the class— meeting by the leader. If the candidates do not answer the Missionary readily, the Leader who stands by, answers for them. Frequently have I seen the candidate turn to the Leader and ask him what to answer. After the examination, the Missionary enrolls their names in a book for baptism.

"The leader has the whole care of making Christians, and I think I may say the acknowledged care. For one missionary, who has baptized over five thousand, said,

"I do not know that I have ever been instrumental in the conversion of a single soul. All were converted at the time the Leader set them off.

"When baptised, the white inquirer ticket is exchanged for a red member ticket.

"Several times when I was examining candidates for baptism, I told them, that I feared they had never been born again. Upon which they would go away with the Leader a while and by and by return, saying, 'now minister we can answer the questions.' On one such occasion I labored more than two hours, trying to convince one who had returned in this way, that if he was not a Christian before, I feared he was not now. I told him that he might answer all my questions, and yet not be a Christian. But he seemed to get no idea of what I meant. He said 'other minister always take them, when the Leader tell them what to answer; and he spose I have some mad against him, so I no baptize him.' My heart bled for the poor soul, and for thousands of others, going to destruction under the care of, I had almost said, 'blind leaders of the blind.'

"This manner of making Christians accounts for the 'glorious news' we so often hear from the island of Jamaica, of the triumphs of God's grace. O, my soul, come not thou into their secret.

"Many of the missionaries receive by their tickets, as a consequence of the Leadership system, more than five hundred dollars per month. And by exchanging as they call it, once in four weeks, they make thirteen months a year. For this money they make no account with the society at home. The plate of these missionaries; their equipage; their sumptuous fare, would astonish people in this Republican land. They riot on the price of souls of their people, and then wiping their mouths, they say, 'We have done no wickedness.' Is this language too severe? These vast sums are given by these poor unsuspecting people with the confident expectation of procuring an admittance to Heaven therewith. The missionaries know this! What then can I say less."

On the foregoing extract the editor of the Monitor comments as follows:

"The above is only a part of a letter from one, who had personally witnessed the practice of the system, as presented in that number of the Register, the whole being too long for us to copy. Two things which herein appear, might more fully be exposed by further quotation: but let this for the present suffice, as an exhibition of the high—handed traffic in souls, and the Heaven daring lies and delusions, practiced in the 19th century, by certain men, called Baptist Missionaries. O, tell it

not in Gath, except it be to warn the nations of the earth of such as may come to them in sheep's clothing, while inwardly they are remaining wolves!

"It is true, many are at home embarked in the benevolent doings, as they are called, for conscience sake, supposing them to be instructed by the Gospel, and necessary for its extension. To such we would say, 'Search the Scriptures,' and see, if this or that be there required; and if ye love the Lord Jesus Christ, and cannot build on your own works, nor teach others to do so, be exhorted, in the Lord's name, to come out of Babylon, and all her practices.

"The Gospel of the Son of God we love, and in its behalf hope to be found laboring, whether for its extension or defence; and to see the gracious fruits of the Spirit fitly manifested in all the dear saints unto the praise of Him, who has called them, is our earnest prayer. But we abominate all those tricks, and humanly originated schemes, which lead the children of God into captivity, to the maxims of worldly policy; and which give room for the apostles of Satan, to practice their craft, in making a gain of godliness, "deceiving and being deceived."

"The system, here under consideration, will admit of almost an endless variety of forms and shape, through the wisdom of such as are concerned in shearing the sheep and goats. Nor need Mr. Weston be surprised, if his character be assailed, or his truth called in question, even by many of that kind of professed Baptists, in this his native land, who are strenuously seeking to systemize things so finely, that ministerial support shall be, by taxing the church and world; while benevolence shall be enforced by the precept and authority of blind guides.

"Who does not know, that the system of modern doctrines and practices, in relation to making Christians at home, as well as professedly extending the Gospel abroad, is daily becoming, under the agency of New School principles and men, more and more like the Popish traffic in 'indulgencies,' or the old delusive system of priestly pardon."