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Objections Obviated, and God Glorified, by the Success of the Gospel
among the Heathen.

A

SERMON

PREACHED AT ALBANY N. Y., OCT. 7, 1829,

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FOR

FOREIGN MISSIONS.

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SERMON.

ACTS xi, 18.

WHEN THEY HEARD THESE THINGS, THEY HELD THEIR PEACE, AND GLORIFIED GOD, SAYING, THEN HATH GOD ALSO TO THE GENTILES GRANTED REPENTANCE UNTO LIFE.

It gives us a peculiar pleasure to accompany the missionaries through those regions, and along the very paths, once consecrated by the residence and the journeys of Christ and his apostles. But how much more interesting to the missionaries themselves, to walk in the footsteps, and stand on the precise spot, where our blessed Lord walked and stood, when upon earth. What mingled emotions must be enkindled in the bosom of the pious pilgrim, while he drinks of the same fountain which afforded refreshment to the Son of God when weary with journeying: and not only this; but enjoys the privilege of gazing on the hallowed place where he became incarnate;—where he first saw the light of this world;—where he closed his eyes in death;—where he arose from the sepulchre;—and where he was parted from his disciples, and ascended into heaven, while in the very act of

blessing them. It is no superstition to be tenderly affected by scenes like these: it is the genuine effect of the association of ideas, in minds imbued with the love of Christ. It must have occurred to the attentive reader of the journals of our missionaries, that they often present facts, which bear a strong resemblance to incidents recorded in the Acts of the Apostles: and we are especially struck with this analogy, when the facts occurred in the same place: as, when we read the accounts of their visits to Jerusalem, to Bethany, to Gethsemane, to Calvary, to Bethlehem, to Nazareth, and to the sea of Tiberias; and of their journeys through Samaria to Galilee, and along the coasts of Tyre and Sidon.

It is worthy of remark also, that the principles, on which the Gospel is now opposed, and its preachers persecuted, are the same which had influence in the days of the apostles; and that its converts are inspired with something of the same spirit of constancy and inextinguishable zeal, which characterised the primitive disciples. There is, moreover, a resemblance in the manner in which the Gospel is introduced, and obtains footing. The success of the apostles, on their first visit to a town or city, was commonly small: a single family, or one or two individuals, were often the first fruits of the preaching of Paul or Peter: but these formed the germ, from which a flourishing church soon arose. "The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard-seed, which a man took and sowed in his field; which indeed is the least of all seeds; but when it is grown it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof."

The commission which our Lord gave to his disciples was universal in its extent, and couched in terms as perspicuous as could have been selected; and yet so inveterate were their national prejudices, that they confined their ministry to the Jews and Samaritans. The idea that the church was still to be limited to their own nation, had taken such complete possession of their minds, that even the plenary inspiration of Pentecost did not remove the error. It became requisite, therefore, that a special revelation should be given to the church on this subject; which was communicated, by a vision, to the apostle Peter, while he was sojourning at Joppa. An angel was, in the first place, sent from God to a Roman centurion by the name of Cornelius, a devout and charitable man, who had his dwelling at Cesarea; directing him to send to Joppa for Simon, whose surname was Peter; "and he," said the angel, "will tell thee what thou oughtest to do." The angel himself could have readily informed this man of every thing which he could learn from Peter; but God chooses that the Gospel should be preached by men of like passions with ourselves; and having instituted the ministry of reconciliation, he has resolved to honor *that*, as the means of bringing the heathen to the knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus. Angels are ministering spirits sent forth to minister unto the heirs of salvation; and, although they deliver short messages to the saints, they have received no commission to preach the Gospel. Cornelius was, therefore, directed to send to Joppa for Peter, who should tell him what he ought to do. But what would Pe-

ter think of such a message from a Gentile with whom he had always been accustomed to believe it was unlawful to hold any intercourse? The same God who had sent his angel to Cornelius, had taken care to prepare the mind of the apostle for this extraordinary communication: for, while he was engaged in fasting and prayer, in the retirement of the house-top, he saw a vision, the import of which was, that all national distinction between Jews and Gentiles was done away, and that the middle wall of partition was broken down. But doubting, at first, what the meaning of this vision might be, he was relieved from all suspense by the suggestion of the Holy Spirit, who said to him, "Behold, three men seek thee; arise, therefore, and get thee down, and go with them, doubting nothing, for I have sent them." Peter, in obedience to the divine command, went with the men, and preached the Gospel to Cornelius and to all that were in his house: and the Holy Ghost having manifestly come upon them, he proceeded to receive them by baptism into the Christian church. These were the first fruits of that glorious harvest of converts, who were, in a short time, gathered into the garner of the Lord from among the Gentiles.

Tidings of this extraordinary event soon reached the apostles and brethren at Jerusalem, and produced no small surprise and agitation among them; and as soon as Peter was come up, they who were zealous for the Mosaic rites and distinctions, contended with him, and said, "Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them. But Peter rehearsed the matter from the beginning, and expounded it in

order unto them;” and concluded his defence, by saying, “Forasmuch then as God gave unto them the like gifts as he did unto us who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, what was I, that I should withstand God?” “When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, then hath God also to the gentiles granted repentance unto life.”

It is pleasing to observe, how ready these good men were to yield to the truth; and how sincerely they rejoiced, that God had granted repentance unto life, to the gentiles as well as to the Jews.

In accommodating these words to our present circumstances, I will, from them, take occasion to show,

That the manner in which God, by his providence and grace, has prospered the efforts of his church, to extend repentance unto life to the heathen, in our day, ought to silence all the objections which have been made to this benevolent enterprise;—

That the success which has attended the labors of missionaries among the heathen, should induce all Christians to glorify God for his great goodness;—and,

That hence it may be inferred, that they should go forward in the good work, with increasing vigor, zeal, and confidence.

I. When it was first proposed to propagate Christianity in Hindostan, a great clamor was raised against the design, by interested men, who pretended that any attempt to change the religion of that people would be attended with civil commotion of the most alarming kind; and that the consequence, in all probability, would be the subversion of the British empire

in the East. This objection to missionaries was founded on principles merely political; and, if it had been true, ought to have had no weight with Christians, to prevent them from propagating the gospel for the salvation of men. But when the experiment was made, what was the result? Were the predictions of those wise politicians verified? So far from it, that in no single instance has the attempt by missionaries, to propagate the gospel in India, been followed by the least tumult or civil commotion; and it is a notorious fact, that the immense population of that country has never remained so tranquil and submissive, as since the period of the introduction of missionaries.

But another objection was made, which could have no other basis than indifference to all religion. It was alleged, and strongly urged, that the heathen were contented and happy in the possession of a religion of their own, to which they had been long accustomed, and which was adapted to their genius and climate; and, therefore, that it was not only impolitic, but inhuman, to disturb their minds with a new religion. The amount of this objection is, that all religions are equally good, and equally safe; and that Christianity possesses no such transcendent excellency as would make it a rich blessing to any and every people. Now, who does not perceive that this objection, though coming from the mouths of nominal Christians, is replete with the spirit of infidelity? But even on mere principles of humanity, and in relation to temporal happiness, it is capable of the clearest demonstration, from undoubted facts, that Christianity would confer on the heathen more important

benefits that can be derived from any other source. Turn your eyes to the horrid system of idolatry which prevails in India and other heathen countries;—contemplate the multitudes whose lives are sacrificed to the gods of their cruel superstition;—consider the slavish and desolating effects of these false religions upon the minds of all their votaries; not only in eradicating every virtuous and generous principle, but also in withering every kind and amiable affection of our nature: and having contemplated this scene, turn your attention to the benign influence of the Christian religion, in its tendency to control and mitigate the fierce passions of man; to civilize and refine society; and to cause the obligations of justice and truth to be felt:—and then, without any regard to its divine origin, or its necessity to secure future happiness, ask yourselves, whether benevolence does not require that we should make every exertion to rescue our fellow-men from the horrors of superstition, by inducing them to adopt the religion of Jesus? There exists not upon earth a greater foe to human happiness than Pagan superstition. While the body simply is enslaved, the mind may be tranquil and free, and may enjoy consolations which no external violence can interrupt or destroy: but when the *soul* is held in cruel bondage, all sources of rational pleasure are cut off. And even as it relates to the sufferings of the body, no severer tortures have ever been invented or endured, than those inflicted by conscience, misguided and terrified by superstition. There can, therefore, be no work of greater benevolence, than to rescue our fellow-creatures from this wretched thral-

dom, by the diffusion of knowledge, and the propagation of just ideas respecting the character of God, and the true nature and extent of human duty. And if we admire the philanthropy of Howard, who devoted his life to the alleviation of the miseries of those unhappy men whose bodies were immured in loathsome dungeons, how can we withhold our cordial approbation of the faithful missionary, who labors in the midst of appalling dangers and difficulties, to deliver men from the intolerable bondage of superstition?

As the apostle Peter silenced all objections to his entrance among the gentiles, by a simple statement of facts, in humble imitation of his example, I would refer to the well-known facts which have occurred in our times, relative to the happy change produced by the Gospel in the temporal condition of some of the most wretched of our race. Let the objector impartially consider the melioration of condition in degraded Africans, rescued from slave-ships:—let him ponder the wonderful progress of civilization and good moral habits among the Hottentots, the Caffres, the inhabitants of the Society and Sandwich Islands, and also among our Cherokees and Choctaws; and he will never be disposed again to bring forward this objection.

But this leads me to the consideration of one of the most plausible objections ever made against Christian missions: which is, that it is impossible to communicate the sublime truths of our holy religion to men in a savage state, or to bring them under the influence of its moral precepts. It was confidently

asserted by philosophers, and reiterated by reverend theological professors, that civilization must precede Christianity. These opinions, during the last century, were so often inculcated, and so confidently repeated, that many persons well-disposed to the diffusion of the light of the Gospel, received them as undoubted axioms. But how civilization was to commence and be carried on, no one undertook to explain. None appeared to possess zeal enough to go among the savage tribes to civilize them; and thus, as far as these sentiments prevailed, all missionary effort was paralyzed, and a cloud of discouragement cast over every prospect of seeing the heathen brought into a better condition. It was well, however, that all Christians did not fall under the influence of this philosophical delusion: some continued to believe, that the only effectual means of civilizing barbarous nations was, to send them the Gospel; and, acting on this principle, they braved the ridicule and contempt of the wise men of this world, and zealously engaged in the glorious work of evangelizing the nations;—a work which, we believe, will never be arrested, until the desired end is fully accomplished.

By mere reasoning, this class of objections could never have been so answered, as to convince those by whom they were made: but God, in his providence, has, by a series of facts, as gratifying as they are wonderful, silenced forever, as we would humbly hope, these philosophical dogmas, which stood in the way of the progress of the Gospel. And it was so ordered, as if on purpose to refute these prevalent opinions, that the first remarkable success in Protestant

missions should take place among the most savage and degraded tribes of the human family. The Greenlanders, the African negroes, the Caffres, the Hottentots, the Boshmen, and the wandering aborigines of America, furnished the first trophies of missionary exertion. And to these were soon added, the inhabitants of the islands of the South Sea, and of the Pacific. Certainly, no people more remote from civilization existed in the world, than some of those who have, by missionary labors, been converted to Christianity. And, however uncandid men may depreciate the work, and affect to believe that nothing has been done; yet, in the view of the wonderful reformation wrought, and the extraordinary exaltation of the character, not of a few individuals, but of whole tribes and nations, the friends of missions have just grounds for mutual congratulation and triumph. The problem is now solved, and it is by incontrovertible facts decided, that the Gospel is capable of producing its genuine effects on the most barbarous, as well as the most refined, of the human species; and that it possesses the power of civilizing men the most savage. Indeed, if it were not so, the heathen never could be converted to Christianity without a miracle; for we know of no other means than the Gospel by which savage ferocity can be subdued, and Pagan ignorance enlightened. And if we could communicate the arts and refinements of civilized life to savages, it is not evident that this would at all prepare and dispose them for the reception of the Gospel. When the most refined and civilized nations throw away all regard for religion, they become, as the history of our own

age attests, the most ferocious of all mankind. Genuine civilization must commence with reformation of heart; and nothing but true religion is capable of producing this effect.

Another objection, nearly allied to the above, and proceeding from the same quarter, was, that the enterprise was impracticable, by reason of the established prejudices of the heathen. The idea of converting the world to Christianity, has been ridiculed as weak and fanatical. To the philosophic eye of men of reason, there seemed to be no proportion between the means and the end proposed to be accomplished. That a few zealots, unsupported by civil authority, and unpatronised by the learned and the powerful, should think of revolutionizing the religion of the nations of the earth, all of whom are wedded to their own systems of worship, and many of whom by reason of their caste and prejudices are almost inaccessible, was viewed with ineffable contempt, by men who looked no farther than to second causes. And, indeed, if the missionary enterprise be contemplated, merely on the principles on which human calculations of success are usually made, the opinions of such objectors do not appear so very unreasonable. If the special aid of Almighty God might not be hoped for, then the prospect of accomplishing so great an object, by means so feeble and inadequate, would be discouraging enough. But if there be truth in Holy Writ, the conversion of the world is an event decreed in the counsels of heaven; and there is every reason to believe, that it will be brought about by human instrumentality. And it accords with the known meth-

ods of divine administration, in the establishment and advancement of the church, that instruments and means are often selected which appear contemptible in the eyes of the world: and frequently, from small beginnings, the most glorious events are made to follow. Of the truth of this remark, the original propagation of the Gospel is a sufficient illustration. But the best answer which can be given to this objection, is, as before, to point to the facts, and to say, SEE WHAT GOD HATH WROUGHT! Behold the wonderful progress of the Gospel, in a short time; and where the obstacles were as great as any that exist elsewhere. Contemplate the strange spectacle of whole nations casting away their idols, and princes and people, the aged and the young, sitting down at the feet of the missionaries, to be instructed in the things which relate to their salvation. I am aware, indeed, that some persons in our country have been pleased publicly to represent the missionary enterprise to be a failure. They have gloried, as if the wisdom of their predictions was now verified; and as if, indeed, nothing had been accomplished. Now, I know not what these men would consider a successful missionary operation; but, if the effects produced by the exertions of missionaries in South Africa, in Tahiti and the neighboring isles, in the Sandwich Islands, in many parts of India, and among the tribes of our own continent, can be believed to be events of no importance, then it may be supposed, that if the world should be converted—if the Jews should be brought in with the fullness of the gentile nations—these incredulous, or rather, uncandid persons, would

not believe that any thing was yet effected. With such prejudices we do not contend: they are too inveterate and deep-rooted to be shaken by argument. The facts are before the world; let every one judge of them as he pleases; but, in the mean time, the great and glorious work is advancing and spreading, in spite of the prejudice and envy of men. And what is doing in the missionary cause, I doubt not, will, in the eyes of posterity, be viewed as far more important and glorious, than the most considerable political events of our times. Then it will be admitted, that Hall, and Newell, and Mills, and Judson, and Parsons, and Fisk, and Kingsbury, and Stewart, and King, and Bingham, with their faithful coadjutors, did not labor altogether in vain. No; when the envy and prejudice of the present generation shall have died, the memory of these men will be blessed; and the simple narrative of their indefatigable labors and patient sufferings, will be read with interest and gratitude, in the four quarters of the world, and in the most distant corners of the earth; and that, too, when the names of the enemies of missions shall rot in complete oblivion.

The next objection to combined and vigorous missionary efforts, which I shall notice, is, that the time is not yet come—the time for the conversion of the nations unto God; and that, until God's appointed time shall arrive, although some partial effects may be produced, yet no general or great success will attend missionary efforts, however wisely they may be planned, or vigorously executed. If we were certain that this objection rested on the ground of truth, it

would indeed discourage our hearts; but would not alter our duty, or remove the obligation of the Saviour's command, to "preach the Gospel to every creature;" for, neither the purposes of God, nor his predictions, are made the rule by which we are bound to regulate our conduct. What God requires of us is, to obey his commandments; the effects which may be produced by our exertions, belong to him, and he will regulate them according to his own good pleasure, and according to his faithful promises.

But this objection may be founded, either on the prophecies, or on the present aspects of Providence. Now, in regard to the first, it may be observed, that the church will probably wait long before she begins her efforts, if she suspend them until an agreement shall take place among expositors, respecting the times and seasons predicted in Scripture. Prophecies are seldom capable of a precise interpretation until they are fulfilled. We also know, that learned men, who have devoted themselves to the study of prophecy, have been egregiously deceived in their most confident predictions of the course of future events. And for ourselves, we believe, "that secret things belong to God, but those which are revealed, to us and our children;" and that the "times and the seasons" are among the things which "the Father hath kept in his own power."

But considering the objection, as it relates to the present aspects of Providence, we are disposed to maintain that it is destitute of a shadow of foundation. On the contrary, we are persuaded, that almost every thing in the existing state of the world,

proclaims aloud to Christians, in a voice not to be misunderstood, that the door of access to the Gentiles is now opened, and that they are required to enter into the fields, which are already white to the harvest. The facilities of propagating the Gospel in foreign countries are multiplied far beyond any conception which our forefathers could have entertained on the subject. Formerly, by reason of the imperfection of naval architecture, the want of astronomical instruments, and the defect of skill in navigation, it was considered a prodigious thing for any one to circumnavigate our globe;—an event, in our days, of the most common occurrence. Not many centuries ago, the art of printing did not exist; all books were produced by the slow process of writing every letter with the hand; and, long since this wonderful art was invented, the ability to multiply copies of the Scriptures, and other books, was extremely limited; but recently, by the improvements of the press, and the application of steam, and other mechanical powers, books can be multiplied almost at will; and at prices far below those at which they could be afforded, previous to the commencement of the present century.

The facility of acquiring foreign languages is also greatly increased in our times. More literary men travel in lands once little visited, and a greater number of those who remain at home, apply themselves to the study of various languages; by which means, teachers of foreign tongues are greatly multiplied as well as the necessary apparatus of grammars and lexicons.

To all which, it may be added, that the intercourse between parts of the earth widely separated, is much more frequent and intimate, than in preceding ages; so that now, there is scarcely an inhabited country or island on the globe, which is not visited by our hardy and enterprising seamen. Missionaries, at present, find no difficulty in reaching the place of their destination. A voyage around the Cape of Good Hope, or Cape Horn, is not, in our day, considered too arduous for tender females.

But there is another weighty consideration which shows that the time for missionary exertion is come; and that is, the fact, that scarcely an effort has been made, by any society, in our day, which has proved abortive. Almost all denominations of Protestants have engaged in this good work, and all appear to be successful. But I have already had occasion to refer to the success of missionary exertions, and will not now dwell upon the subject.

The only other objection to foreign missions which I think it necessary to notice, is, that by the prosecution of this enterprise, we injure the churches at home, and neglect to supply with the means of grace, the vast and increasing population in our new settlements; and that, by our exertions to send the Gospel to the heathen, we exhaust those funds, which are requisite for the successful operation of our benevolent institutions; and, also, take away from our destitute churches, some of our best men, whose services at home can very inconveniently be dispensed with. More prominence is given to this objection in the statement, than to the others; because, while *they* spoke

the language of infidelity, or prejudice, or at best, philosophy, this speaks the language of pious zeal; and no doubt, has often proceeded from the mouths of those sincerely attached to the cause of God. And if the effects of foreign missions were, indeed, such as is here supposed, it would behoove us to pause, and consider our ways, if not to retrace our steps. But I appeal again to facts, and on these we are willing to rest our cause. We say, then, that if the prosecution of foreign missions has actually lessened the resources, or diminished the zeal and vigor of our churches at home, we will cease to urge the subject any longer upon your attention. But how stands the fact? I appeal, now, especially to those who, like myself, are advanced in years. My brethren, has any thing occurred within your remembrance which has given so great a spring to vital piety, in the churches, as the enterprise of sending missionaries to the heathen? Has it not been the means of enlarging the views, and elevating the aims of Christians, in regard to the duty of promoting pious and benevolent objects of every kind? When, before, has so much been done to diffuse religious knowledge, and to extend the means of instruction to the poor and destitute? And who are they who most abound in acts of beneficence towards these objects? Are they not those very persons who are most zealous and liberal in the support of foreign missions? The fact is, that a new and holy impuse has been given to the Christian Church, in consequence of this enterprise; and already the churches have been more than repaid for all their sacrifices and contributions for this cause.

The waves which have by this means been put in motion, still go forward, with increasing swell, and we cannot anticipate what will be the full effect.

And as to the loss of men, I say, they are not lost—not lost to the American churches. The disinterested and noble act of forsaking their native land and all their affectionate friends forever, does more good to the church than a lifetime of common labor. It teaches the whole religious community, that Christianity has not lost its original power by the lapse of ages. It casts a dark shade upon the groveling pursuits of this world and has a mighty tendency to lift the soul up to God. The departure of a few devoted missionaries does not diminish the number of faithful pastors, or laborers, in the home mission;—it increases them many fold. Many a pious youth is led to devote himself to the service of the Lord, in the Gospel of his Son, in imitation of the foreign missionaries; and many a youthful heart has received its first permanent religious impressions, from perusing the accounts of the labors of these faithful men. And for myself, I cannot doubt, that the published journals of the missionaries have done us more good, than the labors of their lives would have done, had they continued at home. I hope none will think that I disparage the labors of pastors and home missionaries: this is far from my purpose. They too are engaged in a good work—in the same work;—but their labors are rendered more useful by the existence of foreign missions. The standard of their motives, in entering on and prosecuting their work, has been elevated, by the self-denial of the foreign missionary; so that, they all begin to feel more and more, that they are called to forsake

all for Christ; to consecrate every faculty to Christ; and to determine to know nothing but Christ, and him crucified; and to glory in nothing but the cross of Christ.

II. The second thing proposed in this discourse is, to take a brief survey of the grounds furnished, by the course of events, in regard to missions, for thanksgiving to God, and for encouragement with respect to the future. When the apostles and brethren, at Jerusalem, heard Peter's narrative of the circumstances of the first entrance of the Gospel among the Gentiles, "they glorified God" for his goodness in "granting repentance unto life," to those whom they had before considered as abandoned to hopeless perdition. As to numbers, there was, indeed, as yet, but little to boast of; one family only had been gathered into the church; but they viewed this as the first fruits of a glorious harvest. Their eyes were now opened on a new field of labor. Their commission, they now perceived, instead of being confined to the small nation of the Jews, was co-extensive with the world. By this interesting fact, their views of their future work and success must have been exceedingly enlarged. It is not wonderful, therefore, that with one voice, and with one accord, they gave praise unto God, whose goodness and grace appeared so glorious, in granting repentance unto life to the Gentiles. And here, I would observe, that the situation of the Christian church now is, in some respects, analogous to that of the infant apostolic church, at the time when this event took place. It will therefore be worth our while to spend a few moments in surveying more particularly, some of the reasons which demand the fer-

vent gratitude of every Christian and of every philanthropist, arising out of the recent missionary operations of the church.

And first, it is a solid ground for thanksgiving, that the friends of Zion have been awakened from their long slumber on this subject; and have been, in some measure, made to feel their obligation to send the Gospel to the heathen. It is truly astonishing, that among so many men of eminent piety, as have flourished since the Reformation, so few should have been impressed with the duty of bringing the heathen to the knowledge of the truth. The great reformers themselves seem not to have turned their attention seriously to the perishing condition of the world: but it may be plead in apology for them, that they had work enough at home;—that the obstacles which they met, and the persecutions with which they were pursued, rendered it impossible to concert a plan, or to acquire the necessary resources for such a work. But their successors cannot be so easily justified; many of whom lived at ease, and enjoyed favorable opportunities of commencing the good work of sending missionaries to the heathen: and, especially, it strikes us with surprise, that none were found among the Puritans (a people eminent for piety) willing to carry the glad tidings of salvation to their perishing fellow-men in heathen lands. When two thousand godly ministers were at once ejected from their charges, by the ruthless hand of tyranny, why did not some of them—yea, many of them—turn their faces to lands covered with Pagan darkness? Numbers of them, it is true, sought an asylum in this

wide continent, and brought with them, the Gospel in its purity, the light of which we now enjoy; but although surrounded by Pagans, few seem to have felt the importance of communicating to them the words of everlasting life. Such men as Eliot and the Mayhews will indeed be remembered by the friends of missions as long as the world stands; but in the midst of a pious people, and surrounded by faithful pastors, they stood almost alone in their generation, as the advocates for the heathen of this country. And, at a later period, the Brainerds, without the hope of an earthly reward, or even the expectation of being noticed in their self-denying work, wore out their lives in fatiguing and arduous labors for the conversion of the savages of America. And although the name of David Brainerd is now known and honored by many, in the four quarters of the world; yet, perhaps, during his life, no minister in this land pursued his course in greater obscurity, or with less sympathy and encouragement from his brethren.

But let God have all the glory; the scene is now happily changed. The United Brethren set the example of missionary zeal, patience, and perseverance. The church of God in Great Britain next felt the sacred impulse; and the most distant shores now see her sons coming to the heathen, "in the fulness of the blessing of the Gospel of Jesus Christ." Churchmen and dissenters vie with each other, in holy emulation, to be foremost in extending the knowledge of a Saviour. Other European Christians have not been backward to engage in the glorious work; and none have labored in this field with more wisdom and suc-

cess, than the little band of Danish missionaries. America, also, has caught the heaven-enkindled flame; and hereafter, her missionary exertions will form the brightest pages in her eventful history. The spirit of evangelical missions has, for years, been expanding, and diffusing gradually its benign influence through our churches. Every year witnesses an increase of zeal on this subject, manifested by a more enlarged and active benevolence.

May this leaven still continue to ferment until the whole lump is leavened! A very small portion of the church are yet aroused to the proper tone of feeling on this subject; but, for what God has done for us, we are bound with grateful hearts this day to glorify his name.

Another reason why we should gratefully acknowledge the goodness of God, in the review of the missionary events of the last few years, is the increasing ardor with which a large number of Christians have been inspired. Their pious and benevolent affections have not only been increased in intensity, but have been elevated and enlarged, so as to comprehend in their embrace, a much nobler and wider field than before. Formerly, the minds of Christians were occupied altogether with the concerns of their own salvation, and of those immediately around them; and no one seemed to have his heart expanded with a benevolence which took in the whole world; but now, the fact is far otherwise. Many have been impressed with a feeling of tender solicitude for the salvation of their brethren of all nations; and these feelings have gone on increasing in depth and expansion, until they

have prompted some to acts of noble munificence, and others to still more glorious acts of self-denial; so that we now begin to come to some just understanding of the spirit which actuated the primitive disciples of Christ.

Another ground of rejoicing which we have, in the retrospect of missionary transactions, is, that men of suitable character have been provided to carry on this enterprise. When foreign missions were first spoken of in this country, so low and contracted were the views of some of us, that we could scarcely be induced to believe, that any persons would be found willing to leave all, to take their lives in their hand, and commit themselves to the mercy of a heathen population. I can well remember the emotions of surprise excited in the minds of many serious people, when it was announced that the Baptist missionaries, (Carey and his company,) had actually sailed for India; and also, afterward, when so many missionaries left England for the South Sea islands. But the impression became deeper, when it was known that a number of young men, in our own land, had devoted their lives to the service of God among the heathen. *Now*, such facts have become so common, that they produce little surprise; but *then*, it was like a new idea, which, while it startled, enlarged and elevated the mind.

But the point to which our attention should now be turned is, the excellent character, appropriate talents, and devoted spirit of the persons who have undertaken this arduous work. Call into review the missionaries employed by every society, and you will not easily find a brighter constellation of worthies.

Some of them have been adorned with eminent gifts, as well as endued with large measures of grace; and have made acquisitions in literature, which place them on a level with the most learned men of the age: and when we take into consideration the motives by which they were induced to make these attainments, they deserve a rank far more elevated than that to which mere literary men can ascend. The character of the missionaries of the present day has not yet been justly appreciated: by future generations, they will be more highly honored, both on account of their learning, and their benevolent labors.

The missionary enterprise is in itself so noble and benevolent, that when the mind of any man is fully occupied with it, it elevates not only his moral, but intellectual character, many degrees above the point to which it could have arisen in any other pursuit. Is it not a fact, that some of our missionaries, who, if they had remained at home, would never have risen above mediocrity, have manifested a wisdom and energy in their character, which may be justly termed extraordinary? In composition, few writers of the present day excel some of them, in those qualities which are characteristic of a truly good style. But it should not be thought strange, that the prosecution of an enterprise so great and benevolent, should elevate the character and impart unusual vigor to the intellectual faculties; for it is a principle of our constitution, that the mind receives its cast and complexion from the objects with which it is conversant, and from the pursuits in which it is engaged.

It also affords good ground for joy and thanksgiving, that there has arisen no discord among the friends of foreign missions, to distract their counsels and paralyze their efforts. Both in Europe and America, the utmost harmony has prevailed among those,—however different in denomination,—who have been engaged in the missionary operations of the day. The little, narrow feeling of party and sect, which has, on other occasions, operated so balefully, has had no influence here. The missionaries, attached to different societies, and belonging to different denominations, meet in foreign lands as brethren of the same family. They feel that they are laboring in the same cause, and serving the same glorious Master. With hearty good-will and mutual confidence, they are accustomed to counsel and assist one another, in the prosecution of their arduous work. No where upon earth does the genuine spirit of catholicism more prevail, than among missionaries, and the ardent friends of missions.

While it is convenient for the several ecclesiastical bodies, respectively, to devise their own missionary plans, and superintend their operation, there is no ground for jealousy or suspicion; and there should be no provocation of one another, except to “love and good works.” The field is wide enough, and the work ample enough for all; and, under existing circumstances, they can bring forth their resources more effectually, than if they were all united in one body. And it should be felt, and I trust is felt, that the success of one society is the success of all. For the same reasons, there should exist no feeling of rivalry

between home and foreign missions. The cause of both is the same, and the love of Christ and his kingdom, is the impelling motive of both, in their various operations. Let then this brotherly love continue, and this harmony ever prevail. In that moment, in which missionary societies begin to contend with each other for influence and pre-eminence, in that same moment, it will be manifest, that the true spirit of missions has departed. And whoever shall have any agency in enkindling discord among the friends of this blessed work, will be guilty of a great offence; and wo to him by whom such an offence shall come. But it cannot, it must not be, that the progress of this work of God should be retarded or hindered, by the petty jealousies of its professed friends. A better spirit prevails; and will, I trust, more and more prevail, until all our sectarian distinctions shall be melted into the complete “unity of the spirit:”—when all the servants of God, “shall see eye to eye;” and the bond of union shall be TRUTH, PEACE, and CHARITY.

The only other cause of praise to God, which I shall mention at this time, is, that so many benighted heathen have already been enlightened with the rays of divine truth; and that there is a cheering prospect, that the light which has been enkindled in heathen lands will be diffusive; and that the knowledge of Christ, now received by many, will be handed down to their posterity, to the most distant ages. The success of the gospel among the heathen in our day, considering the small number of missionaries employed, and the formidable obstacles which stood

in the way, is truly wonderful. In the islands of the great sea, the word of the Lord has indeed had free course, and is glorified: In Africa, Hindostan, Ceylon, and even among the Burmese, there are converts to Christianity, in opening, softening, and sanctifying whose savage hearts, the power of God has been manifested, as remarkably as in the days of the apostles. Nor should we overlook the numerous instances of sound conversion, evidenced by a holy life, which have occurred among the wandering tribes of our own forests. Of these, some have already finished their earthly course, and, in dying as well as living, have proved the efficacy of gospel grace, to support and comfort the soul in the most trying circumstances. Who, that knows the value of one immortal being, will not rejoice and glorify God for his unspeakable mercy, in granting repentance unto life, to so many perishing heathen? These fruits are the product of the humble and painful labors of your missionaries: but they are not the harvest, they are merely the first fruits. The precious seed which has been sown shall not be lost: it will hereafter spring up abundantly, and gladden the hearts of all who love Zion, and pray for her prosperity.

The past success of missionary labors ought not to be estimated so much by the actual number of converts, as by the *preparation* made for future and more extended operations. The Holy Scriptures have, by the diligence and learning of missionaries, been translated into many different languages; and are now in the progress of wide and rapid circulation.

Tribes, destitute of a written language, before they were visited by your missionaries, have been taught to read, and already begin to peruse the wonderful works of God, recorded in the Bible, in their respective tongues. Thousands of heathen children are now collected in schools, through the assiduous labors of missionaries, and are daily taught lessons out of the lively oracles. Native teachers have been raised up in many places, and are now engaged in proclaiming a crucified Saviour to their deluded countrymen. Surely, these are not the effects of mere human exertion; but God has been with his faithful servants. He has, in much mercy, bowed his heavens and come down, to aid and bless their labors; and has, through their instrumentality, "granted repentance unto life to the Gentiles." They have received the same spirit of faith and obedience which is given unto us; and now rejoice in the name of Jesus, as we do; and place all their confidence in his atoning blood. Have we not reason, then, to exult? and ought we not, without ceasing, to praise and glorify the name of God, the maker of heaven and earth?

III. In conclusion, I would say, that having so much cause of thanksgiving from a retrospect of the past, it behooves us to be animated with renewed zeal and courage, in the further prosecution of this great work. The way of the Lord is made ready, even a high way for our God. The most appalling difficulties have been encountered and overcome; Jordan is already passed, and the land of promise lies before us; while behind, there is nothing but a barren

wilderness. The Macedonian cry, COME OVER AND HELP US, is heard from a thousand tongues. Your missionaries most earnestly beseech you to send them aid: not because they are weary of their work, but because the harvest is too great for them to reap. Their most painful feelings arise from their inability to satisfy all importunate demands made upon them for instruction. Only cast your eyes on the Sandwich Islands—behold the ardor with which knowledge is there sought, by the high and low, by princes and people, by the old and the young. Methinks I see the withered hands of the aged, stretched out to us, in earnest entreaties that we should send some to teach them the way of salvation before they sink into the grave, shrouded in all the darkness of heathenism. The multitudes of dear children, who are pressing into your schools, and the half of whom cannot be accommodated, seem to send across the wide waves of the ocean, a piercing cry for more missionaries—more teachers—more books. And while this is the condition of a part of the heathen world, of which we, as a society, have taken solemn charge as our own peculiar field of labor, shall we be contented with what has already been done? How can we be at ease, or suffer this subject of powerful interest to pass away from our thoughts, for a single hour? An individual cannot do much, but the combined efforts of many can accomplish all that is wanted, so far as relates to funds. Now is the time for the wealthy to invest their money to the best advantage. Now, they have a precious opportunity of making to themselves friends, by means of the unright-

eous mammon. Now, the man whose heart deviseth liberal things, may make such an appropriation of his riches as will produce a blessed gain to many and to himself through eternity. Why have we not at least a hundred missionaries in the Sandwich Islands? Are they not needed? No one can dispute it. Are there no more pious men and women, who are willing to devote themselves to this service? Doubtless there are hundreds, willing to go, who might be useful in that field; if not as public preachers, yet as teachers of youth. What then is the obstacle? I am ashamed to mention it. It is the want of adequate funds. Will future generations credit the account? Will it be believed that one thousandth part of the sum spent by serious Christians in acknowledged superfluities, was sufficient to support all the missions in the world: and yet that it was found impossible to induce them to consecrate this small portion of the goods which God gave them, to the honor of his name, for the advancement of the Redeemer's kingdom, and for the salvation of immortal souls! How they who owe themselves to the Lord Jesus, and who have been bought with the price of his invaluable blood, can withhold any thing which his cause needs, we cannot understand. Dear brethren, if you ever mean to act with zeal and energy in this work, now is your time. The night is far spent, the day is at hand; it is, therefore, high time to awake out of sleep. Some of us will soon have made an end to all our earthly labors. Perhaps before another meeting of this Board, some of its present members will have been called to give up the account of their steward-

ship. If we have any remaining duty to perform, in aid of foreign missions, let us address ourselves to the work without delay. Since our last annual meeting, this Board has been deprived by death of three of its venerated members;* one of whom was among the youngest of our number: and it deserves to be remembered, that we are now met in the house in which our amiable, enterprising, and accomplished brother, was wont to lift up his voice in the compassionate warning of sinners, and in preaching the unsearchable riches of Christ. May each of us who survive, be ready to welcome our summons to another world, if we should be called away before the expiration of another year.

But, my beloved brethren, while we live, let us be found diligently and faithfully engaged in our Master's work. Let us gird up our loins, and be found watching and laboring, when our Lord shall come. And those of you who have wealth to account for when you stand before the judgement-seat of Jesus Christ, make, I beseech you, that disposal of it, which you have reason to believe would be pleasing in his sight. If any of you are meditating in your hearts, to offer something to the Lord, in a way in which it may be beneficial to the cause of Christ, remember, I entreat you, the hundreds of millions, who are perishing for want of the bread of life. Defer not the execution of your pious and benevolent purpose, until you shall be under the necessity of resigning every thing into other hands. Testamentary charities are

* The Hon. John Jay, Hon. John Hooker, and the Rev. John Chester, D.D.

useful; but they are often suspicious as to their motive. It is giving when we can enjoy our property no longer, and when it can scarcely be called our own. What proportion of their property or their income Christians should devote to the peculiar service of God, we presume not to prescribe. Let every one consult the suggestions and promptings of his own benevolent feelings, "and as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; for the Lord loveth a cheerful giver." The temple of God was reared of old, only by free-will offerings, and the spiritual temple must now rise in the same way. We present no motives to provoke you to liberality, but such as are truly Christian. But we will say, that they will be blessed indeed, to whom shall be granted such love to Christ, and such benevolence to men, that they will cheerfully offer, not merely a part, but THE WHOLE of what they possess, for the furtherance of the Redeemer's kingdom, and the conversion of the world. And this would not be a new thing under the sun; for, in primitive times, many, out of love to Christ, gave up all their possessions, that they might serve him more entirely. And let those of us who have neither silver nor gold to give, be careful to bestow such things as we have; and which may be much more precious than worldly treasure. Especially, let us be mindful to pray for the prosperity of Zion and the peace of Jerusalem; and give no rest to our covenant-keeping God, until he has fully given to his Son the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession. The fervent, inwrought, united, persever-

ing prayers of the true Israel of God, shall at last be the effectual means of accomplishing the great object which we seek to promote, and which Jehovah has so repeatedly promised to his church, in the latter days.