

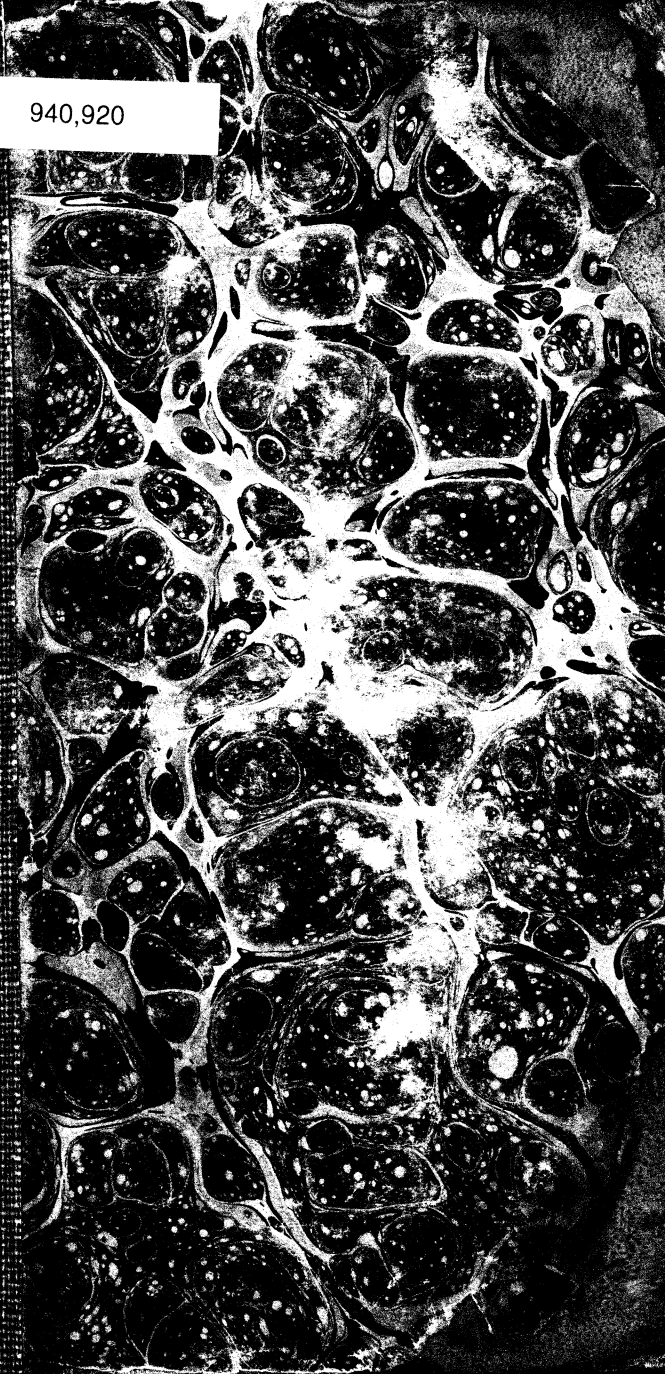
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MISSIONARY PAPER, NO. X.

THE WORLD TO BE RECLAIMED BY THE GOSPEL.

*An Address by the Rev. ARCHIBALD ALEXANDER, D. D., Professor
in the Theological Seminary at Princeton, N. J.*

[Delivered at a missionary meeting in the First Presbyterian Church of Philadelphia, Oct. 3, 1823, at the close of the Nineteenth Annual Meeting of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions.]

THE conversion of the world to Christianity, is the most desirable and glorious object, to which the mind of man can aspire. For the achievement of this work, the noblest endowments of the human mind and the richest gifts of a benignant Providence should be put in requisition. Other objects, it is true, fill a larger space in the eye of the public, and much more engage the attention of the great majority of men. This may emphatically be styled the age of enterprise. Improvements in political science, in education, in agriculture, in manufactures, in navigation, in the typographical art, and in the means of inland transportation have advanced, in our day, with a success which is truly admirable; and every genuine philanthropist will rejoice in all these improvements, which promote the convenience and comfort of this present life: but when we compare them with the object which the American Board of Foreign Missions and other similiar institutions have in view, they dwindle into insignificance. For when all these arts are brought to perfection, they leave untouched the core of the evil by which mankind are chiefly afflicted. Man's worst disease is of a moral nature, and can only be removed by moral remedies. The Gospel of the grace of God is in fact the only effectual antidote to the multiplied evils with which our race is afflicted. Human society may be refined and embellished by other means, but the moral character of man cannot be meliorated, nor his substantial

happiness promoted effectually, in any other way, than by the cordial reception of the truths of the Gospel. What a blessed change may be produced on uncivilized nations, simply by the Gospel, is now exhibited to the view of the world, by the labors of missionaries in the Society and Sandwich Islands, in South Africa, in India, and among the tribes of our own Indians. Men inimical to the Gospel may affect to undervalue these results of missionary labor; but in the eyes of all impartial judges, a truly wonderful work has been wrought. Let objectors show, if they can, any such reformation of human character by any other means. But it may be asked, Why does not the Gospel reform the wicked lives of Christians, if it possesses such a salutary efficacy? To which I answer, that it does, just as far as it is cordially embraced; although, from the circumstances of the case, the change cannot be so manifest, as in the conversion of men from the abominations of idolatry. Only let the Gospel be cordially embraced and obeyed by all nominal Christians, and the whole face of society would be changed. Piety, benevolence, peace, harmony, justice, and friendship would then be predominant; and those numerous evils which now deform and degrade the character of man, would disappear. Such a change in the moral condition of society, would, it is true, subvert, or render useless, many institutions, now deemed useful and necessary. The whole expensive machinery of war would at once be annihilated. Your capacious prisons and penitentiaries would then be converted to some nobler use, than the confinement of human beings. Even your courts of justice and halls of legislation would be in a great measure deserted. The traveller, in passing through your streets, would no longer behold splendid theatres rising up on every side; but their place would be supplied by schools of useful learning, and by churches dedicated to the worship of the living God. The universal prevalence of the spirit of evangelical piety would not, as some suppose, render men gloomy and unsociable. There would indeed be less of that frothy, noisy mirth, which cannot bear reflection; but much more solid peace and contentment;—pleasures more pure and elevated; yea, an hundred fold of more true, rational delight.—It is then a thing most devoutly to be desired, that the whole world should be brought under the influence of the Gospel.

The conversion of the world to Christianity, is a most certain event. No truth is exhibited in prophecy with more distinct clearness, than this. "The Gospel shall be preached to all nations. The kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ. The fulness of the Gentiles shall come in—and all Israel shall be saved. The heathen shall be given to Messiah for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession. The glory of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea." The time shall arrive, when there shall no longer be any need for one to "say to his neighbor, Know the Lord, for all shall know him from the least to the greatest." The event is certain, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. But *when* it will occur, is concealed from us. It is not for us to know the times and the seasons which the Father hath put in his own power. Like the day of judgment, which, though most certain as to the event, as to the time is unknown to the noblest created intelligence; so, the precise time of the commencement of the latter day glory is hidden from all men. Some so interpret the prophecies as to teach, that that day will not arrive until a time of dreadful darkness and persecution shall have almost overwhelmed the true church of Christ: while others are sanguine, that the dark times of the church are all past, and that the dawn of the millennium already appears. But neither the one nor the other of these sets of interpreters have been able to confirm their opinions by such solid reasons as to command our unqualified assent. And perhaps, it is most favorable to the active and zealous exertions of the church, that the precise time of Zion's glory should be concealed from our knowledge. Absolute certainty either of the near approach or great distance of this event, might have the effect of paralyzing exertion, by leading to a neglect of means; in the first case, from excess of confidence, and in the other, from despair of success.

But the conversion of the world, occur when it may, will be brought about by human agency. The means of accomplishing this glorious event are already in the hands of the church. There does not appear to be any absolute need of a resort to miracles again, to achieve this work; and therefore there is good reason for believing, that there will be no miraculous interposition to bring about this event.

4 *The World to be reclaimed by the Gospel.*

The world will be converted by the ministry of reconciliation. Agreeably to the commission of our Lord, the heralds of the Gospel will go into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature. Their sound shall go out through all the earth; and the Captain of Salvation, according to his promise, will be always with them, even to the end of the world.

This duty of carrying the Gospel to all nations has been incumbent on the church, in every age; but for a long time it has been much neglected. Now, it has devolved upon us; and it behoves us to ponder well the nature of our responsibility. The salvation of the world, seems to be in some sort suspended on the part which the church shall now act, in regard to this momentous subject. And for her encouragement it may be said, that although we cannot predict the day, or the year, when the Jews shall be restored, and the fulness of the Gentiles shall come in: yet we may say with confidence, that when, in the exercise of lively faith and fervent, united prayer, the church shall put forth all her energies, and faithfully and perseveringly employ all the means which God hath appointed and put in her power, then shall Zion arise, and shake herself from the dust, and "her righteousness shall go forth as brightness, and her salvation as a lamp that burneth:—then shall Jerusalem put on her beautiful garments, and become the joy of the whole earth."

But although our Lord discourages us from indulging a prying curiosity respecting the "times and the seasons," yet he would have us be vigilant in *observing the signs of the times*: just as men are accustomed to observe the aspect of the heavens, that they may judge whether the weather will be foul or fair. It will not be amiss, therefore to spend a few moments, in considering what those signs are, which will indicate the approach of the predicted day of universal grace.

One thing which must undoubtedly precede this event, is *the preparation of suitable instruments to accomplish the work*. Men of the right spirit must be trained and disciplined for the service of the Lord, in sufficient numbers to bear the message of salvation to every nation under heaven. At present, therefore, it is evident, that we are not prepared to carry the commission of our Lord into full effect,

because the necessary instruments are wanting. But if the Great Head of the church intends that the church shall achieve any thing great in promoting this glorious cause, her attention will be turned with great earnestness to the business of searching out and training up young men for the ministry. This will be felt by all Christians to be a most important and solemn duty; and no promising candidate for the sacred office, will be prevented from proceeding in his preparatory studies, for want of the means of prosecuting them. It will be a favorable sign of approaching good, when the number of faithful preachers of the Gospel is multiplied.

But not only must the *number*, but the *qualifications* of ministers, also, be increased. When God is about to accomplish a great work upon earth, men will be raised up, possessing the spirit of the apostles and primitive martyrs;—men who will not count their own lives dear, nor be unwilling to seal their testimony with their blood, if the honor of their Lord should require such a sacrifice. Indeed, it is not reasonable to expect, that the conversion of the world will be achieved, without the shedding of blood. The grand adversary of God and man, will not relinquish his government of the world without a struggle. Whenever the same spirit which actuated the first preachers of the Gospel shall animate the breasts of missionaries, and when the strong holds of sin begin to fall before the spiritual weapons of the Gospel, Satan will come forth to the contest, with horrible rage; and the more, because he will know that his time is short. Know, then, that as soon as ministers of the Gospel shall be multiplied, and when they shall generally manifest a full devotion to Christ and his kingdom, and shall willingly offer themselves to the most perilous and arduous services; so that when the inquiry is, Who will go for us to heathen or Mohammedan lands? the response will no longer be feeble, from a very few, but a host will present themselves, crying with alacrity, “Here are we, send us.” then will there be good reason to augur, that the triumph of the church is near.

And it will also be a sign for good, *when Christians generally shall be penetrated with a deep and tender concern for the salvation of their fellow men.* The two grand defects in Christian character now are, the want of love to

Christ, and the want of love to men. This last is not so much noticed as it should be. We are too easily satisfied with a sort of negative goodness, in regard to this point. If we bear no malice to our race—if we do nothing positively injurious to them, we seem to think, that we have fulfilled our duty; whereas the law of God requires that we love our neighbor as ourselves; and our Savior teaches, that every man of whatever nation or religion, on whom we can confer a benefit, is our neighbor. The heathen, then, are our neighbors, whom we are bound to love as ourselves. The Jews are our neighbors, and also the Mohammedans. And hereafter Christians shall be made to feel the pressure of this subject on their hearts, daily. It will occupy their thoughts, and engage them in unceasing prayer. They will often speak one to another about these things, and will with solicitude inquire, what they can do to rescue their fellow creatures from imminent ruin. And if funds are needed for this purpose, there will be no disposition to withhold them, when the Lord hath need of them, and when they may aid in saving immortal souls from eternal death, and bringing them to everlasting life. Indeed, when this subject comes to be felt by Christians, in its true weight, no sacrifice of money, time, or ease, will be considered any thing, in comparison of the momentous object, which will then occupy the mind. There will be need no longer of earnest solicitations to obtain the necessary funds. The people will make free-will offerings in such abundance, that it will be necessary to make proclamation, as in the camp of Israel of old, that the people stay their hands because there is already enough and more than enough. How easy would it be for the people of this city to furnish all the funds which are now needed for every Christian enterprise on foot? The cheapest superfluity in common use, would be an ample resource. The money expended for ardent spirits, as has been proved over and over again, would greatly exceed every demand for benevolent objects. When God's work is to be done, the people will give with a willing heart, and they will work willingly. The rich, of their abundance, will present large gifts to the treasury of the Lord; and give as much as they will, the poor widow, who bestows her two mites, will, in the Lord's esteem, outdo them all. Then, every Christian will be

solicitous to have some part in building the spiritual temple of the Lord. Wealth will be more richly enjoyed when laid out in the service of God, than it ever was when hoarded up, or when expended in luxury and show. The poor man will then labor with more alacrity and diligence, prompted by the love of Jesus, and the love of souls, than he ever did from the cravings of want, or avarice. When such a state of the church, as I have described, shall become general, then be assured, that the day of God's grace is near at hand, even at the door. Then will you behold many running to and fro in the earth, diffusing the knowledge of the truth through a thousand channels. Then it will no longer excite surprise, that men forsake every thing for Christ, and cheerfully give up all their gains to his service. Then you will no longer see the whole burden of missionary labor devolved upon the young, but men of the first talents, and occupying the highest stations in the church, will be found willing to relinquish every thing, and go to foreign and inhospitable lands, without the hope of returning.

Dear brethren, the world shall be converted, whether we have any instrumentality in the work, or not. What we do, we should do quickly, for our time flies rapidly. Soon the night will come when there can be no work done by us. After a short period, the Master will come, and institute an examination into the conduct of every successive age. Are we willing that, on that great day of account, it shall appear that we have had no part nor lot in this glorious work? What! shall it be said that the church now upon earth, has utterly neglected her Lord's command, and buried her talent in the earth? What Christian heart can endure the thought? But when the final scrutiny shall be made, are we contented that it shall be seen, that the American churches, so favorably situated for missionary enterprise, have taken no decisive part in the great work of converting the world? Are we willing, that it should be proclaimed to the universe in that day, that we were so occupied in cutting canals, and making roads, and extending manufactures and commerce, that we had neither time nor money to devote to the advancement of Christ's kingdom? And, finally, is there an individual in this assembly, who now feels willing to die, without having lent some aid to the cause of God—who

can think of appearing before Christ without one good work of this kind, to evince the sincerity of his faith and love? My dear brethren, if you have not the means of doing any thing else for the advancement of his glorious cause, yet you can help it on by your prayers; and after all, prayer is the most effectual weapon, which will be used in pulling down the strong holds of Satan, and the most successful means of ushering in the glory of the latter day. When the church shall be inspired with the spirit of fervent, effectual prayer, then shall all other means be forthcoming, and the dawn of the jubilee will be manifest. Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly. Amen.

EXTRACTS FROM DR. ALEXANDER'S MISSIONARY
SERMON, PREACHED AT PHILADELPHIA, MAY, 1814.

Spirit and Conduct of the Apostles.

WE read in history of many persons travelling into foreign countries to acquire curious and useful knowledge, and of their imparting their dearly purchased treasure to a few chosen disciples on their return; but I believe this is the first instance (that of the apostles) on record of any persons leaving their own country, and visiting foreign parts, with no other than the benevolent purpose of communicating important information to their fellow creatures. The very novelty and sublimity of the project of reforming a world lying in wickedness, bespeaks a divine impulse; but the success of these first missionaries stamps the Gospel with such a seal of authenticity, as neither the lapse of ages, nor the sophistry of its enemies can ever obliterate.

The apostles divided the world amongst them, and whilst some went to the East, others directed their course to the North,—the West,—the South. They turned their back upon all their earthly friends and prospects, and went forth to meet sufferings and death in their most frightful forms; but they were supported by the conviction that they forsook nothing, but what was perishable; and by the confidence that heaven was *before them*, whichever way they turned their faces; and *near*, wherever they might breathe out their souls. Discouraged by no difficulties, and ap-

palled by no dangers, they penetrated into countries not described by the geographer, and whose story has not been told by the historian: and even the record of their own labors is only in heaven. Suffice it to say, that they proved faithful unto death, and have gone to receive a crown of life. Most of them, it is believed, received also the crown of martyrdom: but *where*, or *how*, or *when*, we cannot with any certainty say.

Inducements to Zeal and Activity in the Propagation of the Gospel.

In whatever way, or among whatever people, we think it most expedient to propagate the Gospel, let us without delay be active in the fulfilment of this most important duty. The motives, which should urge us to activity and combined exertion, are of the most forcible kind. The honor of our God and Redeemer, are deeply concerned in this matter. The consideration of so many millions, giving that worship to dumb idols, which is due to God only, ought deeply to affect our hearts, and will, if we really love his name. Our bosoms should glow with inextinguishable zeal to overturn, by the artillery of the Gospel, those monstrous temples, and hideous idols, on whose altars such multitudes of our degraded fellow-creatures are daily offering their polluted worship, and their sacrifices of cruelty.

And is it no dishonor, think ye, to Christ, that, although he offered himself a propitiation for men of every nation, so many have never yet heard his name? When oppressed with a sense of sin's desert, when wounded and stung with remorse, they pine away and die in their sins, and no messenger of mercy comes near to speak to them in words of consolation. Did not Christ come to destroy the works of the devil; and yet are not four-fifths of the population of the world under the baleful influence of this prince of darkness? Consider, I beseech you, the value of one immortal soul; which nothing could redeem from death, but the precious blood of the Lamb of God, and which is destined to an immortal existence, in glory and happiness, or in darkness, disgrace, and everlasting misery! Calculate how many souls are, every year, perishing for lack of that knowledge, which, by sending the Gospel, we might convey to them. I have no wish to enter into the discussion of the question, whether the salvation of some of the hea-

then be possible without the knowledge of a Savior, in some extraordinary way unknown to us. In whatever way this question may be decided, it will have little or no influence in altering the motives which should impel us to seek the conversion of the heathen; for it will be admitted by all, that they who are abandoned to gross and abominable idolatry, or to enormous vices against the law of nature, cannot be saved in that state.

What then, I would ask, is the condition of the heathen in regard to religion and morality? Are they not almost universally either idolaters, or enslaved to the most degrading vices? No words are sufficient to describe the abyss of depravity, into which most heathen nations are sunk. Their moral condition is wretched and disgusting beyond any thing that the imagination can easily conceive. All those encomiums which philosophers of a certain school, and for a certain purpose, have lavished on distant savage tribes, are proved to be false—utterly false.

Now, prejudice and system aside, I appeal to your good sense—I appeal to the benevolent feelings of your hearts—I appeal to your conscience to decide, whether it be more charitable, to neglect the conversion of the heathen, on the supposition that they may possibly be saved without the Gospel; or to carry to them *the word of God*, which we know *is able to make them wise unto salvation*? The apostles certainly acted under the belief that the knowledge of Christ by the Gospel, was *ordinarily* necessary to the salvation of sinners; otherwise they would never have sacrificed their lives in endeavoring to bring the heathen to the knowledge of the truth. They believed, that there was but one name given under heaven, by which men could obtain salvation; and therefore they exerted themselves to the utmost, to spread abroad, in all lands, the savor of this precious name, knowing that men could not believe *on Him, of whom they had not heard; and that they could not hear without a preacher.*

O ye ministers of the Gospel! the successors of the apostles! imitate their praise-worthy example. Have compassion, I beseech you, on your fellow creatures and brethren, in whose veins the same common blood circulates, and who are destined to the same immortal existence. O pity their wretched condition, and endeavor to rescue them from impending ruin.

And ye people of God! who have tasted the sweetness, and experienced the power of the Gospel, you know how dreadful a thing it is to stand exposed to the sentence of a broken law, and how inexpressibly delightful, by faith, to view, *the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world.* Your feelings have been made alive to what concerns the glory of God, and the honor of your Redeemer, and the welfare of immortal souls. Can you therefore remain at ease? Can you cease from exertion? Can you restrain your prayers? Will you suffer your silver and gold to canker in your coffers? Or will you any longer lavish your treasures on inferior and unnecessary objects, when you enjoy such an opportunity of applying a portion of your wealth to the most excellent of all objects? God, in his providence, is, in our times, wonderfully opening a door for the propagation of the Gospel among the heathen. The long, dark night of superstition and error, we trust, is drawing to a close. The morning star already appears in the eastern horizon; and ere long, we hope, that *the sun of Righteousness* will arise on the millions of Asia, *with healing under his wings;* and will extend his benign influences over the whole habitable world. The sound of the trump of jubilee, proclaiming *the day of salvation and the acceptable year of the Lord,* is now heard on the plains of Hindoostan, in the deserts of Africa, and in the remote and far separated isles of the Southern Ocean. The Indian, the Negro, the Hottentot, the Tahitian, begin to emerge from the dismal darkness of barbarism, and to assume the dignity of man, and enjoy the privileges of the Christian. They begin to taste the sweetness of redeeming love, and sing the praises of the Prince of Life in their own native tongues.

The Bible, which contains the words of eternal life, has been circulated of late to an extent, and with a success, which fills the world with astonishment. A few years ago, we should have deemed incredible that which we have lived to witness;—and if an angel from heaven should declare the events, which will occur during the next half century, perhaps our faith would stagger at the wonderful report. But however great and glorious the events, which may be evolved by the revolutions of the great wheel of Providence, they will probably be effected by the means which God has already appointed, and which have been commonly

employed. The churches will be roused to exertion. A spirit of prayer and supplication will be granted. A liberality, unknown to former ages, will be called into exercise. Many will be stirred up to offer themselves as missionaries. Christians, agreeing in the great fundamental doctrines of the Gospel, will become more united in spirit, and more harmonious in operation. The aspect of the nations will be changed. Wars will cease, and the sword be turned into the plough-share, and the spear into the pruning hook. National animosities and antipathies will be extinguished or mitigated. Kings will then esteem it their highest honor, to become *nursing fathers, and queens nursing mothers, to the church*. There will then be no occasion for pathetic addresses to the passions to extort a scanty pittance from the pockets of the avaricious. *The Lord loveth a cheerful giver*. Let every one then, according as the Lord hath prospered him, and according as he hath purposed in his heart, bring his oblation to the treasury of the Lord. The ponderous gift of the man of wealth, and the widow's mite, will both be acceptable. Of one thing, however, you may rest assured, that no one will become ultimately the poorer, for giving liberally to such an object: and this I believe would be the result, if your contributions should be increased tenfold. Finally, remember that the principal fruit of your liberality will be enjoyed in heavenly blessings. *He who soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he who soweth bountifully, shall reap also bountifully.*