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Presbyterian Church in the
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The great revolt in India



THE

GREAT REVOLT IN INDIA:

ITS EFFECTS UPON

THE MISSIONS

OF THE

PRESBYTERIAN BOARD.

J. L. Wilson

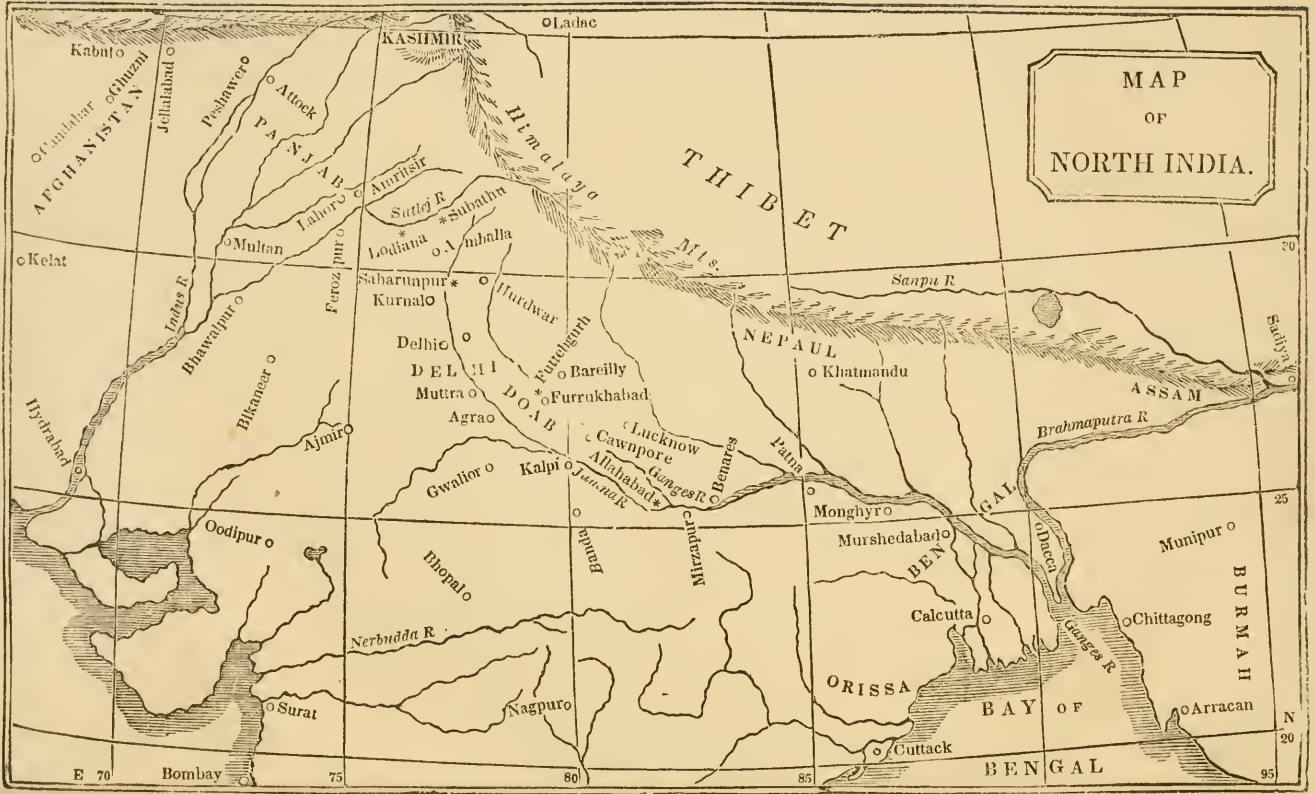
NEW YORK :

PRINTED FOR THE BOARD OF FOREIGN MISSIONS,

By EDWARD O. JENKINS, No. 26 Frankfort St.

1857.

MAP
OF
NORTH INDIA.



MISSIONS OF THE PRESBYTERIAN BOARD.

GREAT REVOLT IN INDIA.

A MISSIONARY meeting of much interest was held in the Scotch Presbyterian Church in this city, on Sabbath evening, the 4th inst., in connection with the peculiar and trying circumstances of the missionaries and others in India at the present time. In the absence of Dr. Lowrie, to whom the correspondence with these missions more particularly belongs, remarks were made by the other Secretaries, the substance of which are now published for the information they contain in relation to the present condition and future prospects of these missions.

REMARKS BY REV. J. LEIGHTON WILSON.

In the prosecution of the great work of spreading the knowledge of the gospel over the earth, an enterprise involving the honour and glory of the Redeemer, as well as the best interest of mankind, we have experienced, in one of the great sections of the heathen world, an unexpected and almost overwhelming revulsion; in view of which, it becomes us, as a church and people, to humble ourselves before God, and inquire why this great calamity has been permitted to befall us.

But let us glance first at the history of our missionary

labours in India, and the causes which have led to this sad disaster.

Northern, or Northwestern India, the seat of this revolt, is also the scene of the earliest missions of the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions. It covers about the third of the whole of British India, and has a population of more than thirty millions, made up chiefly of Hindoos, Mohammedans, and Sikhs. It has always been regarded as a most interesting field of missionary labour, not only on account of its own size and importance, but for its central geographical position, furnishing a doorway, as it were, to all the great nations of western, central, northern, and eastern Asia, all of which in their turn must become interesting fields of missionary enterprise. Its importance in a missionary point of view, can scarcely therefore be exaggerated.

It is more than twenty years since our missionary brethren first reared the gospel standard among the pagan and Mohammedan population in that far-off land. They were not only the pioneers there, but up to the present day, they have been the largest and altogether the most effective missionary body in that part of India.

At the time they commenced their labours, that part of Northern India had been but partially subdued to British rule, and the fires of hatred were still smouldering in the hearts of the people; and especially in the hearts of the Mohammedan population, who had been hurled from the proud eminence they held in that country for a long series of years.

The great mass of the Hindoo population, as had been the case in all other parts of India where British authority had been firmly established, soon became reconciled to their new rulers; and indeed, looked up to them

with gratitude, for having delivered them from the intolerable yoke of Mohammedanism.

This would have been the case also with the high caste Hindoos, who, with the Mohammedans, are the chief actors in these bloody tragedies, if it had not been for their extreme jealousy of the levelling influence of Christianity.

The first station occupied by our mission forces was Lodiana, a city of eighty thousand inhabitants, and occupying a central position of what is usually denominated Northwestern India. From this point our missionary labours were gradually extended in a southeasterly direction, along the banks of the Ganges and Jumna, to Allahabad at their junction; and at a later period in a northwesterly direction as far as Peshawur, a city in the extreme northwest corner of the Punjab, and on the borders of Afghanistan. Between Peshawur on the northwest, and Allahabad on the southeast, a distance of nearly a thousand miles, we have fifteen principal missionary stations, all nearly on a line with each other, and located, for the most part, in large cities, the names of which are sufficiently familiar to the readers of our missionary journals.

These stations have been occupied for nearly twenty years past by a missionary force from this country of about fifty persons, besides a large number of native helpers, whom they have trained up on the ground. Thirteen Christian churches have been organized at these different stations, to which there had been constant accessions of hopeful converts, especially during the two last years. Up to the period of the recent disturbances, our missionary brethren had in their schools, under Christian training, nearly four thousand native

youths. For fifteen years past four printing presses had been industriously employed in printing the word of God and other religious books ; and nearly one hundred and fifty millions of pages of printed truth have been scattered far and wide over that region of country.

This brief statement shows that the missionary work had been prosecuted with great vigour. Our brethren were diligent and happy in their work. They felt that they were in that far-off land by the appointment of their Saviour ; and not only did they enjoy many tokens of his approval, but, ever and anon, as a warm-hearted convert from Mohammedanism or Brahmanism joined their company, they felt less like strangers in a strange land. Their prospects were becoming brighter and brighter every day, and their hearts glowed with love and gratitude as they contemplated the ripening harvest in every direction. They had sowed in tears—they had toiled and borne the heat and burthen of the day, and now they are whetting their sickles to gather the rich harvest at their very doors.

But suddenly a dark and mysterious cloud appears on the horizon, not larger at first than a man's hand, but it extends and spreads itself, until the whole heavens are covered with blackness, save that lurid flame which occasionally flashes across its bosom, to make its blackness more black. All is silent and trembling ; when a fiery torrent gushes forth, and like the desolating lava, threatens to consume and sweep away everything good in the sight of God, or dear to the heart of the Christian believer.

It is soon seen that the Mohammedans and high caste Hindoos, natural enemies under other circumstances, but like Pilate and Herod at the trial of Jesus, are leagued

together for the extirpation of everybody and everything that can in any way be identified with the sacred name of Christ. These remorseless men, having seized the military power of the country, seem to be transformed into fiends, and deeds of cruelty are perpetrated, which need not be recited, but which scarcely have a parallel in the annals of the human race.

Most of our missionary brethren, with their little ones, by the good hand of God upon them, made their way to places of refuge which had been provided for them. One company, alas! we fear, were overtaken by the storm and sunk down in the open plain under the relentless strokes of their cruel persecutors.

The question involuntarily springs up in thousands of hearts, Why was this? Was there no covert provided for them? Where was the angel of the covenant? Were these not as dear to the Saviour as the others, and where was the promise that He would be with them to the end of the world? Why were they not hid away until the storm had passed, and then brought forth, as their surviving brethren undoubtedly will be, to labour afresh for their Saviour?

But it is easier to propound, than to answer such questions. God has reasons for permitting this, and those reasons, are founded both in love and wisdom. What he does we know not now, but shall know hereafter.

It would inflict needless pain upon ourselves, to try to bring up to our imaginations, the scenes connected with the martyrdom of these Christian friends. They are freed, happy spirits now. The night of sorrow is gone, and the day of gladness has dawned brightly upon them. The cry of anguish has been turned into songs of exultation. The blood-stained martyr garments have

been exchanged for robes washed, and made white in the blood of the Lamb.

They have left their friends, and the church to which they belonged, a comforting memorial, in the declaration made in the immediate prospect of a violent death, that "they were willing to lay down their lives for Him who had died for them."

Could the angel who stood by them in the dark hour of death, reveal all that transpired at that moment; the composure with which they laid their dying heads on the Saviour's bosom; the accents of love which he whispered in their ears; the beams of joy that were shed down upon their troubled spirits from Heaven: and the bright visions of heavenly glory that were revealed to them, it would be more than mortal man could endure.

We have but little idea of what is passing between the Saviour and the dying Christian, under any circumstances. The martyr Stephen, while enduring the ruthless assaults of his cruel murderers, "looked up steadfastly to heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God." This much of his experience has been revealed to us. What else he may have seen and heard, we know not.

So in relation to the death of these beloved missionaries. The Saviour was undoubtedly present to console and sustain, though he did not, for wise reasons, avert the stroke of death. And now that they are exultant in heaven, counting it their highest honour, that they were called to suffer a martyr's death, why should we not wipe away our tears, and rejoice with them, that "the Lord God omnipotent reigneth."

It is now generally admitted that the Mohammedans, and the high caste Hindoos, of whom the Bengal army

was, in a great measure, composed, were not only the originators, but have been the chief actors in this bloody revolt.

A variety of causes, no doubt, operated to stir up this rebellion. Impatience of foreign rule on the part of the insurgents, hatred of Christianity, and mismanagement on the part of the East India Company, have, no doubt, been the chief causes.

Many have maintained the idea that this outbreak is to be ascribed mainly to the presence and influence of missionaries. But this is a total misapprehension of the facts of the case. The revolt is entirely a military one. The great mass of the people have as yet felt little or no sympathy with the movement. It is confined to the Mohammedans and the high caste Hindoos, of which the Bengal army is almost wholly composed, and to which the missionaries have had no access in past years.

It is possible that these men may have regarded with jealousy the labours of the missionary, and especially their success among the people. It would not be surprising if such had been the case. Our Saviour forewarns us that his religion, though essentially peaceful, and destined to establish, ultimately, universal peace on earth, would nevertheless cause disturbance in its progress among men. His disciples encountered opposition at every stage of their work. The history of Paul is made up in a great measure with accounts of tumults that followed upon his preaching.

We do not deny that some such feeling may have been excited in the minds of those who have been the leaders in this revolt.

But what if this were the main cause, or the necessary consequences of preaching the gospel to such com-

munities? Should we on this account desist? Where then would be our faith?—where our fidelity to Him, whose right it is to reign over these benighted men? Have we enlisted in his service but to turn our backs at the first appearance of danger?

And what should the British government do, even if it had been ascertained that the labours of the missionaries had been the main cause of the revolt? Will they, dare they put forth a hand to arrest the chariot of the Redeemer? Would that government cast off her own religion, that she might rule over a heathen realm? And if she were even so disposed, would she, could she bear rule for any considerable length of time over men with such natures, such hearts, as have been displayed in this recent outbreak?

But the great question with us is to ascertain what lessons God intends for us by these afflictive dispensations. The conflict between the British army and the insurgent Sepoys, will not, probably, be very protracted. English authority, to all human appearance, must be restored. But the conflict will have been a very costly one to us. When we come to survey the field of carnage, we shall find that four of our dearest missionaries and their families are gone, and more than \$100,000 worth of property destroyed. Surely it becomes us to inquire what lessons the great Head of the Church would impart to us by this dispensation of his providence.

1st. One of the designs of this providence is undoubtedly to humble us before God, and lead us to more earnest prayer.

Should it not be regarded as a rebuke for the little interest we have felt in this great work? God in his providence threw open the whole of India to us. The

evil passions of wicked men were kept under the restraints of his grace. Every facility of access to the country was placed within our reach. The most abundant resources were placed at the disposal of the Church, and if we had done what we might and what we ought, the influences of the gospel might have become so powerful that the catastrophe we mourn might have been averted altogether. We laid an offering on the altar, it is true, but, in the language of another, it was so small, "that God consumed it in anger!" O! how humiliating the thought that God should have found it necessary to adopt so severe a measure to rouse us from our indifference and inactivity.

2d. Another design of this providence, undoubtedly, is to give us correct notions of the true character of the heathen; and the intrinsic difficulty of the work of establishing the gospel among them. We are prone to lose sight of this. Most of those who have written about them have looked only upon the surface—they have looked upon human nature in a quiescent state—or have only seen the lower propensities at work, while the more powerful passions have been kept in check. Missionaries, too, who have had but a limited experience, have been misled in the same way.

The recent scenes in India will give a different impression, and it is well for us to bear in mind that wherever in the heathen world our missionary brethren may be called to labour, they are among men who have not the fear of God before their eyes; and they need, therefore, our constant remembrance and prayers.

3d. A further design of this providence is undoubtedly to make us feel that we must place our dependence upon God for success and protection, and not upon an arm of flesh.

The overthrow of Mohammedanism in India, and the establishment of a Christian government in its stead, has always been looked upon as a most favourable interposition for the cause of Christian missions. And this is a just view of the matter. Our fault, and the one for which we have been rebuked, is in having leaned too much upon an agency, established merely to aid in the work, and having forgotten our dependence upon the favour and blessing of God. It is not surprising, therefore, that he has rebuked us. He will not give his glory to another, and when the day of India's redemption is fully come, the glory of it will not be ascribed to the East India Company, to the British government, to the progress of civilization, or to the labours of the missionaries, but to God alone, the author of it.

4th. Another end of the providence, and it is the bright side of the picture, is, that God is preparing the way for the upbuilding of his kingdom in that part of the world, on a broader and deeper foundation.

We do not see how British authority can be firmly established in India again, until Mohammedan intolerance and High Caste pride are thoroughly crushed out; and when this is done, two of the most serious obstacles to the progress of Christianity will be taken out of the way. We look forward then, to a bright day to succeed this terrible night of darkness.

What then are we, as a missionary Board, as missionaries, and as a Christian church to do, but to gird ourselves afresh to the work, feeling assured that God will accept our humiliation, and bless our future labours, as he has never done before.

MR. LOWRIE'S REMARKS.

He stated that one important question might be further illustrated, and he would confine himself to it.

What is now the duty of the Presbyterian Church in relation to the missionary work in India? In considering this question, several things must be noticed.

1. *What has been the loss of property?*

The missions in India embrace fifteen stations. As far as we are yet informed, nine of these stations have not been injured. The remaining six stations have suffered severely, viz. : Lodiana, Futtehghurh, Agra, Allahabad, Mynpurie, and Futtehporc. At these there have been destroyed, nine churches, thirteen houses, four high-school buildings, two printing establishments, with type foundries, binderies, matrices, and types for the different alphabets of India, and the depositories, with ten millions of pages of the sacred Scriptures and religious tracts. Nine families also, leaving out the missionaries from Futtehghurh, have lost their all—furniture, clothing, bedding, books, in short everything but the clothes they had on.

2. *What amount of funds will the Board require to commence their operations again.*

First : The mission families must be supplied with means to commence housekeeping again. Their salaries are so regulated as to afford them a competent support merely. Second : Houses suitable to the climate of India must be provided for them. When these are prepared, the missionaries may resume their work. The native assistants, and native Christians would collect

around them. As soon as possible the printing press will have to be added, and schools commenced, to such an extent as the Board, after twenty years' experience, may deem expedient. It is not easy to say definitely, what additional amount of funds will be required for all these items. After the first items are supplied, the others would require some time, and of course dependent on the amount of means supplied. All that we can say at present is, that to resume the missionary work, a much larger sum than usual, for several years, will be wanted.

3. *Will the state of India be such, in any reasonable time, that the missionary work may be resumed?*

The present outbreak in India has been a terrible providence. The deliberate murder of the officers, missionaries, and others, and, above all, the cruel, and even horrible treatment of defenceless women and children, makes the blood run cold. I shall not give the details of these fiendlike inflictions; before such an audience I could not describe them. But in view of such unheard of atrocities, in a district of more than a thousand miles, it is no wonder that the first impression, on hearing of them, would be, that the whole of British India, if not lost, would require years of wars and confusion, before peace could be restored. But a calmer view of the real condition of India, and the strength of Great Britain, will show that these fears are groundless. The seat of this outbreak, from Calcutta to Peshawur, contains a population of more than fifty millions. From the accounts given in the English papers, I cannot make the number of mutineers more than eighty thousand, but say they were one hundred thousand. Then

their number, compared with the whole population, would be one to four hundred and ninety-nine. Now we find that the mass of the entire population stand aloof from the mutineers. The only exception worth noticing is, that in the cities a parcel of vagabonds have joined them in plundering and burning the houses. It may be said this large number includes the women and children. If these were all deducted, the relative proportion of the numbers would still be overwhelming, some one hundred and fifty, or two hundred to one. But I am not willing to deduct the women and children. It has been remarked that women and children are God's police. They are conservative everywhere, in every nation, and in every city, and I would rather have on my side fifty millions embracing them, than fifty millions made up of men alone. If the population of India had risen as one mass, as our fathers did in the Revolutionary war, the days of British rule in India would have been ended. But the great mass of the people in India know too well the peace and protection from oppression they now enjoy, to cast these blessings from them. Whatever may have been the injustice of some of the earlier conquests of India, the British government has been to that people the greatest blessing they have ever enjoyed. It is true that many mistakes have been made by their present rulers. I shall notice but one, which is the greatest of them all. The East India Company have expended large sums for education ; but it was for a godless and christless education. Their school commissioners were required to examine every book, and if on any page the name of the blessed Saviour was found, it was carefully cut out ! Divine revelation was excluded, whilst the Koran and the

Shasters were freely* admitted. The result of such teaching was, that the native systems of absurdity and idolatry were destroyed, and the young men came out confirmed deists or atheists. The labours of the missionaries in India, aided and sustained as they have been by the liberal donations, and the example of many pious officers, both in the army and the civil service, have done much to correct this ruinous course, and we may hope that for the future wiser councils will prevail. Still with all the mistakes that have been made, the great mass of the inhabitants of India have reposed under the protection of British justice, administered by many able and faithful men. Viewing then almost the entire population taking no part in the present insurrection, the rule of the mutineers must soon come to an end. It would indeed have ended in a very short time, had it not been for the distance from England to India. When the troops on the way shall have arrived, peace will be at once restored. Important points like Allahabad, Agra, &c., will be again occupied by British officials and their dependents, and the way will be open for our missionaries to resume their peaceful labors. Then native assistants and native Christians will gather round them, and the Lord's work go forward.

4. The call for additional funds comes to the Church at the time of a severe commercial pressure in the community.

This, as far as we are concerned, gives intensity to the afflictive dispensation of God in the suspension of our India mission, and the destruction of mission property there. We are inquiring in regard to the duty of the Church. If it be her duty to resume and even enlarge her missions in India, then additional and even

enlarged means will be wanted, at the very time when the ability to contribute as formerly is greatly lessened. God is teaching his people, by these providences, that his service requires more self-denial than they have ever exercised heretofore. He requires them to honour him with the first fruits of all their increase. A beautiful example we have in the widow of Sarepta. The prophet asked her for a drink of water. "And as she was going to fetch it, he called to her and said, Bring me, I pray thee, a morsel of bread in thy hand. And she said, As the Lord thy God liveth, I have not a cake, but a handfull of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruise ; and behold, I am gathering two sticks that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it and die. And Elijah said unto her, Fear not ; go and do as thou hast said ; but make me a little cake thereof first, and bring it unto me, and after make for thee and thy son. And she went and did after the saying of Elijah ; and she, and he, and her house, did eat many days."

I admit freely that if the members of the Church be contributing according to their ability, as God has prospered them, they are not required to do more. But what is the result ? Last year was one of great prosperity in our whole country. The contributions of the whole Church for Foreign Missions, averaged less than one cent a week to each communicant on the rolls of the Church. Had one cent a week been contributed by each member, instead of a balance of eleven thousand dollars against the treasury, there would have been a balance of two thousand dollars in its favour. Such a statement should fill us all with humiliation and shame.

My dear friends, we are met here to-night to humble

ourselves before God, under his severe rebuke, and under a distressing dispensation of his righteous providence. Truly we are all guilty in his sight, and the the whole Church have much cause for humiliation and prayer before God. We cannot say that we have done our duty. A portion of the Church, ministers and elders, and members have done something, but how very little that has been! How cold have been our prayers! How seldom have we considered the condition of the perishing heathen. One thing is certain, we cannot plead inability. Even in the present financial pressure there are means enough in the hands of professing Christians, to restore and enlarge the missions in India, and to carry forward the work in other places, beyond anything that has yet been attempted, and that too without interfering in the least with any other of the evangelical agencies of the Church.

5. *Can the missionaries be obtained.*

I have referred to the loss of mission property, heavy and severe it has been. But there is another loss, far more distressing, far more heavy and severe; the loss of precious men and women, cut down in the prime of life, by the hands of bloody men, whilst engaged in the missionary work. This distressing providence has been feelingly noticed by the brother who has just addressed you, but it is so connected with the question of the duty of the Church, that I will refer to it also. These martyrs were Messrs. Freeman, Campbell, Johnston, McMullen, and their wives, and two children of Mr. Campbell. Our last letters from these dear friends, are dated the 2d of June, from Futtehguh. They were then fully aware of their imminent peril, and their expression of

faith and trust in the merits of an all-sufficient Saviour, and their willingness, if that were his blessed will, to lay down their lives in his service, afford now a rich legacy to their surviving friends, and to the church of God. From other sources, we have heard, that soon after the 2d of June, our friends, with some European families, left Futtehgurh in boats, intending, if possible, to get to Allahabad. That after descending the Ganges for some distance, they were arrested and taken prisoners by a party of mutineers, in the neighbourhood of Bithoor, some distance above Cawnpore. One account stated that a powerful Zimindar, on the Oude side of the river, agreed to protect them. Another account, that they were taken to Bithoor, in company with the English residents of Futtehgurh. Here we lose the sight of them. We still hoped they might be preserved. But the British army have regained possession of Cawnpore, and Bithoor, and our dear friends are not found alive. With the appropriate and feeling remarks which we have just heard, from my colleague, I most cordially agree. But constituted as we are, we must weep over graves of those we love ; our Lord wept over the grave of Lazarus, and devout men carried the first Christian martyr to his burial, and made great lamentation over him. We are not permitted that sad privilege. Alas, alas, sad and terrible were their deaths, and at the time there were none to carry them to their burial. But I would not thus seek the living among the dead. They are done with sin and sorrow. God himself has wiped away all the tears from their eyes, and the days of their mourning are ended. They have joined the great and ever enlarging circle in heaven, where the redeemed are ever praising God and the Lamb. Let us see of what

that circle is composed, and we shall there find an answer to the questions, whether missionaries can be obtained, and what is the duty of the Church.

The word of God is full of prophecies and promises that the Gentile nations shall be given to Christ. In the seventh chapter of Revelation, the apostle, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, writes the history of the final triumph of the Saviour's kingdom. After recording the sealing of God's servants among the tribes of Israel, he writes, "After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands." In that glorious circle our dear martyred friends are now standing. Among them are redeemed souls, gone up before them, from the mission in India. The Spirit of God has blessed the agency of the Church there, feeble although it was, for the redemption of souls. And not in India alone, but in China, and Siam, and Africa, in South America, and among the Indian tribes of our own land. New names of tongues had to be inscribed on that circle for them, the Choc-taws, the Chickasaws, the Muskogees, the Seminoles, the Iowas, the Sacs, the Omahas, the Chippewas, and the Ottawas, are there, and from these tribes many others are on the way. With such fruits of the feeble efforts of the Church in years past, can she refuse her gold or her silver, her sons and her daughters? Many people and tongues have not yet heard of the Saviour. Their names are not yet in the blessed circle. Let us then, my dear friends, and let the whole Church, rise up as one man to the Lord's work. Let us look away from ourselves to the Lord Christ. Let us take a low place

in the dust before him, and be willing that he may have all the glory of saving lost souls. Let us never forget the inefficiency of all human agency, without the Spirit of God. Let us never forget that it is not by power, nor by might, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts