

ings of Cicero, or from which he could gather whether the preacher were a disciple of Confucius or Zoroaster, Mahomet or Christ!

Archbishop Secker in one phrase gave as "the characteristic of the age" an "open disregard of religion." The bishops themselves led the van in the hosts of the worldly and gay; Archbishop Cornwallis gave, at Lambeth Palace, balls and routs so scandalous that even the king interfered. It was jocosely said that the best way to stop Whitefield in his work of reform was to put on his head the bishop's mitre.

It was such a state of religion and morals, of corrupted doctrine and perverted practice, that bowed true disciples in great humiliation and drove them to God in sheer despair of human help. They felt as David did when he wrote the twelfth Psalm:

"Help, Lord! for the Godly man cease,
For the faithful fall from among the children of men."

Over the entire extent of the Christian Church there began to be little praying circles of devout souls who entreated God once more to pluck His hand out of His bosom and show Himself mighty to deliver.

Of such a character was that little gathering which, eighteen years before Edwards blew that Clarion blast, began to meet in Lincoln College, Oxford; when John Wesley and his brother Charles, Mr. Morgan and Mr. Kirkham, burdened with the awful condition of an apostate church, conferred and prayed together for such a reviving as could come only from the breath of God. Six years after these meetings began there were only fourteen who came together; but, out of that humble meeting where prayer to God was the entire dependence, was born *Methodism*, the mightiest movement of modern times, excepting only the *Moravian*, in the direction of evangelical faith and evangelistic work.

The God of prayer heard these suppliant voices, and Whitefield and the Wesley brothers began to preach with tongues burning with pentecostal flames. They were resisted by a rigid, frigid church; but driven into the open fields and commons, they so reached the masses of the people as they could never have reached them within chapel walls.

It was at this precise juncture that, as has been said, Jonathan Edwards in America, profoundly impressed with the dreadful condition of both the world and the church, urged upon the churches of this country concerted prayer; and across the seas another trumpet peal echoed his own, summoning all disciples to unite in special prayer "for the effusion of God's spirit upon all the churches, and upon the whole habitable earth." The era of prayer was now fairly inaugurated. In England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales, and throughout New England and the Middle States, believers began to pray for a specific blessing and to come together for united supplication.

We have not space to trace minutely the remarkable interpositions of God; but a few salient facts stand boldly out in the historic page. In 1870, under the influence of the Haldanes, Andrew Fuller, Rowland Hill, Sutcliffe and others like them, there came pulsing over the church the mighty tidal wave of genuine revival. William Grimshaw, William Romaine, Daniel Rowlands, John Berridge, Henry Venn, Walker of Truro, James Horvey, Toplady, Fletcher of Madeley—these are some of the men that belonged in this grand apostolic succession that during this period of reformation kept feeding and fanning these revival fires. How was it that, in such numbers and at such a crisis, they were raised up to stem the tide that with relentless momentum threatened to sweep away

every landmark of religion and morality? But one answer can be given: Jehovah of Hosts was conspicuously answering prayer. The full significance of these concerted prayers can never be fully known until eternity opens its august doors and unfolds its sealed book. But we can even now trace to those prayers, at the darkest hours of modern church history, the inauguration of the *new era of universal missions*. Out of these prayers came the establishment of the monthly concert of prayer in 1784, the founding of the first distinctively foreign missionary society of England in 1792, the consecration of William Carey to Oriental missions in 1793, and all the wonderful work of that pioneer who, with his co-laborers, secured the translation of the Word of God into forty different tongues, and the circulation of 200,000 copies, providing vernacular Bibles for 500,000,000 souls, within the space of a half-century!

But this is *only* the tracing of the results of those prayers in one direction. All that modern missions have wrought on four continents and the isles of the sea; all the doors that have opened into every new land of pagan, papal, heathen or Moslem peoples; all the 120 organizations that have been formed to cover the earth with this golden network of love and labor; all the 300 translations of the Bible into the tongues and dialects of mankind; all the planting of churches, mission stations, Christian homes, schools, colleges, hospitals, printing presses and the vast machinery of gospel effort; all the thousands of laborers who have offered to go and have gone to the far-off fields; all the Christian literature created—to supply the demand of awakening minds hitherto sleeping the sleep of intellectual stagnation; who shall say what has not to be attributed to those prayers that from Lincoln College and Paulsbery and Northampton went up to God a century and a-half ago!

We might show, had we space at command, that to those prayers even the details of missionary history are closely linked. For example, take Asia as a continent to be evangelized. To reach its teeming populations the strategy of the gospel struck at the heart of the continent and sought to pierce its vital, working centre, India. England was already there in the East India Company, but that company was virtually the implacable foe to missions, for the unselfish and uncompromising morality of the gospel interfered with a lawless greed that subordinated everything to trade; and so India was really closed to the gospel. The presence there of representatives of an enlightened Christian government had erected new barriers more insurmountable than any that existed before Elizabeth signed that primitive trading company's charter.

But prayer for the "whole habitable globe" included India. And God had heard these prayers and was moving. He had given Britain territorial possessions and political rights in India, and a sceptre over 200,000,000 people. Time was close at hand when in this central stronghold of Brahminism this central field of Oriental missions, Christianity, through that sordid East India Company, was to get a firm foothold. England had an incipient empire in the Indies; this made necessary an open line of communication with the home government in order to maintain an open highway of travel, traffic and transportation between London and Calcutta. Hence, in the providence of God came that political necessity which ultimately determined the attitude of every nation along that highway that was opened through the Mediterranean and the Red Sea. All along that roadway, through great waters, the bordering nations must, if not favorable to Christian missions, at least be neutral.