

Original Contributions.

MISSION TOPICS.

No. IV.—THE ATTITUDE OF THE CHRISTIAN WORLD
TOWARD THE HEATHEN.

We have seen in preceding article what has been done by professing Christians in this century for the conversion of the heathen world. The standing forces available for the work, already in the field, may be summed up as follows:

Missionaries sent out by the Christian world,	7,000
Native preachers and helpers,	30,000
Converts,	3,000,000

These are approximate estimates. These workers have the Bible in two hundred languages. They have chapels, schools, in some places hospitals, printing presses, and many other appliances for effective work. Taking everything into consideration, the success achieved thus far has been great, and the present status of missionary work is a matter for devout thanksgiving. At the beginning of the century, everything was to be accomplished. Languages were to be learned and reduced to writing; the Scriptures were to be translated, printed and distributed: schools and chapels were to be built. Many countries were hermetically sealed against the missionaries of the Cross. The great majority of the Christian people were entirely indifferent to the work, while not a few were openly opposed to it, as some are even yet. Men of character and ability, who were willing to labor in heathen countries, were scarce, and the means at command were scarcer still. Now all this is changed. Every country is now open to the gospel. A missionary spirit and enthusiasm has been developed at home, which is widening and deepening every year. Money is coming into missionary treasuries at an unprecedented rate. Appliances have been multiplied, until now the missionary can go into the field fully equipped for the work from the start. This is the work of a century. It has been very largely a work of preparation for effective missionary operations. It ought to be considered by the Christian world but the beginning. Let us look at the relative significance of it,—or rather let us say the relative insignificance of it. "There is a lad here which hath five barley loaves and two small fishes: but what are they among so many?" said the disciples to Jesus on one occasion, in view of the multitude to be fed. So we may say of the three million converted heathen in the midst of 1,000,000,000 pagans and Mohammedans "What are they among so many?" The church has hardly touched the heathen world; and, as we have already seen, the church never can evangelize it at the present rate of progress. What is there, then, for the church to do? Shall the work be abandoned in despair? This will never do. As long as that command of her Head—"Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature,"—stands on the pages of the church's charter, she can never abandon the work. There is one thing she can do, far better than to abandon it; that is to multiply her efforts many hundred fold. That the church can do this cannot be doubted. Her efforts thus far have been meagre—out of all proportion to her ability; and the effort of the Christian world to-day is shamefully small compared with the ability possessed. The most absurdly trifling proportion of the wealth which God has entrusted to Christian people is devoted to this work of missions. It is estimated that the Christians of America have under their control \$8,000,000,000 worth of property. They gave last year for Foreign Missions the magnificent (!) sum of \$3,500,000. For both Home and Foreign Missions, they give one-sixteenth of one per cent of what they possess. Will anyone say that this is all the church is able to do? It is

not the lack of ability, but the lack of will on the part of Christians, that makes the contributions to this cause so meagre. The expenditures for other purposes show that Americans both have the money to spend and the will to spend it. The annual account of the American people for strong drink foots up \$900,000,000. True, this liquor is not all drank by the Christians of America; would to God we could say that none of it was! But if the non-Christian population can expend nine hundred million for liquor, ought not the Christian people to afford more than three million and a half for missions? Americans expend \$600,000,000 every year for tobacco. To the use of this the Christian population cannot plead not guilty. Probably one-third of it is used by professing Christians. But say they use but one-tenth of it, they then spend \$60,000,000 a year to go up in smoke or to go out in spit, and they give three and a half millions to missions! The ladies of America spend \$5,000,000 annually for ostrich feathers for their bonnets. And all the Christians in the country give \$3,500,000 to convert 1,000,000,000 heathen! It is not poverty but sinful selfishness on the part of the church which limits missionary efforts to so narrow a compass. Broad as is the field, and countless as are the numbers to be reached, the Christian world has, without a doubt, the ability to evangelize the world in a single generation. If the unconsecrated millions, hoarded by unfaithful stewards, millions that are only lent by Him whose is the silver and the gold, the earth and all things therein, were brought forth and used for the Master, the work could soon be accomplished. The appliances for successful work in all lands are ready, waiting to be used. And the men and women necessary to use these means among all nations are ready, waiting to be sent. This is one of the marvels of this age. Word comes from every direction of volunteers, asking to be sent to the heathen world. Bright young men in our colleges by the score are saying, "Here am I, send me." There is no lack, as there once was, of suitable men and women for this work. But these men and women can't go down into this mine unless there is some one to hold the ropes. And a great dearth of rope-holders is the difficulty in the work to-day. Nearly every missionary treasury in the land is periodically empty, and has to plead piteously for the pittance it receives. Christians have money for everything else but no money to save the world. They have thousands for selfish purposes, but only pencies to rescue them for whom Christ died. The church needs to awake out of its dream of selfishness and indifference. The mighty task before it demands a speedy consecration of its possessions to the work of the Lord. Unstinted liberality to the work of Christ is the imperative duty of the church to-day. And to-day should be the watchword in this awakened benevolence. The time for action in this matter is now. Never were there such favorable openings to missionary effort among heathen populations as now. Pagan religions are losing their hold on the people. No new temples are being built for the worship of idols. Japan is turning to the light and declaring herself ready to accept a Christian civilization. India is stretching her limbs, and opening her eyes, and arousing from the slumber of ages. And this is the golden opportunity for Christian effort. There is danger in delay. Infidelity and Mohammedanism are on the alert. The Buddhist priests of Japan, losing faith in their old religion, have taken refuge in infidelity and are translating the works of Rousseau and Voltaire for their people. The preachers of the Koran take advantage of the popular unrest and the longing for new light, and induce the benighted heathen to abandon one system of error only that he may accept another. Nations are being moulded anew. What if they should be cast again in a false mould? Would not the work of the world's con-

version to Christ be greatly hindered? "What thou doest do quickly."

It should be remembered, in connection with this matter of immediate and liberal support of missions, that it is simply to inaugurate the work in all the heathen world that this is necessary. When a heathen is converted, he seeks to convert his fellow countrymen. There are 30,000 such preachers in heathen lands to-day. When once a native church is established in a heathen country it will assume the work of evangelizing its own land, and will support the work. And when once a nation becomes nominally Christian it will seek to Christianize others. Native churches are more liberal in their gifts to missions than are those in civilized countries. It is estimated that at the close of the present century all the missionaries can safely leave Japan, and leave the work of evangelizing the empire wholly in the hands of the native Christians. And should Japan become a Christian land, she would be a mighty and prevailing missionary force in all the lands of the Orient. And so the signs of promise in the missionary horizon are pregnant with great possibilities. The hand of God is soon in ten thousand ways in the preparation of the field and the progress of the work. And the voice of God calls in thunder tones to his people, from the midst of numberless and marvelous developments, to go up and possess the land; to thrust in the sickle, for the earth is ripe and the harvest of the great day has come. May God keep us from the sin of selfishness and indifference in the hour of the world's pressing need. And may He give us strength to go forth, even though weeping, bearing precious seed, that we may have the unspeakable joy of coming to Him in the great day of accounts, bearing our sheaves with us.

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THE PRAYER OF FAITH.

"And whatever we ask we receive of Him, because we keep His commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight."—John iii. 32.

While this scripture plainly teaches that we shall receive the blessing of God if we ask; it as plainly implies that we shall not receive them without asking. "He who asketh receiveth." Prayer is not the only condition of salvation, but it is, most certainly, a condition of all our promised blessings.

I am aware that the necessity and efficacy of prayer is denied, on the ground of natural law; that all blessings and all life are given through divinely established and unchangeable laws; and that prayer will not change them. This objection seems very plausible, but the objector forgets that prayer is a law as natural as the law of gravitation. While we therefore admit the existence and stability of the laws that govern the universe, we as freely admit that prayer is a divinely established law and as necessary as any existing law. But says the objector, "If the forces of matter are controlled by the unchecked and unchangeable laws of nature, how can we expect, by our prayers, to change or influence the course of nature as when we ask for rain, or sunshine, or strength, or health." This objection shows the failure to distinguish between the laws that govern matter and those that govern mind. When we speak of natural laws we seem to ignore the laws of the mind. Is it not a law of nature that mind shall have dominion over matter? When, therefore, our heavenly Father answers our prayers and raises our sick ones and thus controls the forces that govern matter, He is not destroying or interfering with natural law, but is moving along the line of a law which is superior to all other laws and by which all law is controlled. When we hold out our hand and catch the falling leaf do we destroy the force of gravitation or do we suspend it? No, indeed. What is it, then? Simply the mind, which is greater, controlling matter. When we turn the course of the stream and make it serve our purpose