

reach it. I can well understand, when reviewing past history, why they did not try to evangelize and convert the world. They wrought their best in their own narrow circle. Our forefathers labored strenuously to draw men nearer to Christ, and to make them lead devoted lives. Although clouded and even corrupted by all manner of human errors, still they persevered. But when we compare ourselves with them, what do we see? In those bygone days they went on from place to place, into countries which were unknown, and reached only with the greatest difficulty -- into countries where they understood not the tongues, practices, and customs of the dwellers therein. Our progenitors crept on and on, propagating the Gospel they so much loved, but amid all the hindrances peculiar to the days of comparative ignorance. Great men and good men consecrated themselves in this way, and did their part as well as possible, despite counter-acting influences, most of which have entirely disappeared. Look back and behold how the Lord has changed the world for us. Look back to the times of the Apostles, and recall the fact that their work was done at a time when all the knowledge of the very seat of science and art, as far as it went, was ranged against them. All the physical forces that could be arrayed on one side were among the hostile forces at a time when to be a Christian was to incur the condemnation of the whole world, when you could not with safety seek the conversion of others. Here and there, only by chance as it were, could the Gospel be proclaimed, and then only to those who were willing to listen, and by special permission. During those troublous times it was the Church against the whole human race.

Subsequent to the ancient period described there was a tremendous influx of Northern nations with their strong, new characters, having little knowledge, ignorant to the last degree, but, at the same time, in possession of characters which were noble in many ways. These wild hordes were, I was going to say, without the grace of God, but at any rate without the knowledge of God. Then the second battle had to be fought. But those who championed the Gospel possessed all the power that belongs to knowledge, and the result was a triumph for the Cross.

Pass on yet again to the present time, when all the forces and knowledge of the world appear to be arrayed on the side of Christianity. At any rate, all the knowledge, the science, the law, and hopes of future progress in the knowledge of things divine and human, belong to God's Church. We are very far from perfect Christians. Ah, we are very imperfect Christians still. But remarkable advances have been made. The whole world is changed.

God has armed us with all the sciences of the world -- the sciences which sometimes we feel to be a risk, and a serious risk, to the faith which He has implanted in us, "the faith once delivered to the saints." Still we know the Lord reigneth, and that all this will be so guided as to fulfil His own purposes. Meanwhile, we who possess this new knowledge must employ it in connection with the Gospel. Just as we have all knowledge on our side, so also have we all strength on our side. The ruling nations of the world are the Christian nations. The countries that govern the whole earth are Christian. Let us remember, in addition, that the Lord has suddenly laid open to us the whole extent of the surface of the globe, so that we can now penetrate into every corner of it, and establish communications with all peoples.

No longer can we say that we are called to unknown regions, where there are languages which we cannot speak and understand; that we have to deal with laws and customs thousands of years old, of which we know nothing. We cannot say it. We are acquainted with these things through the providence of God; and there lies here the very plainest witness that can possibly be given to the fact that the time has come when the whole Church of Christ should awake, should arise to her original duty, to which, perhaps, she has never been quite alive. In the past, wherever there has been an opportunity, the Lord has raised up individual men to preach the Gospel; but now it is not His way to call individual men themselves, but the Church as a body. It is the whole body of Christ that is called to awake and to be what the Lord commanded, so many centuries ago. The time has come when we can no longer ignore this fact.

We cannot plead that we would willingly go forth, but lack the means. On the contrary, our power to reach all the world increases every day, has increased within the last half-century as never before. When we looked back last year upon the sixty years of the Queen's reign, the most striking fact was the extraordinary increase in the facilities for intercourse between man and man -- facilities of intercourse such as were never dreamt of in earlier days. Voyages of six months reduced to two months. Distant communications which formerly occupied as many months, brought down to a few seconds. Ordinary communications perpetually going on, which at one time were few and far between. The intercourse is so close that we seem to know all those who are living on the other side of the globe. We begin to know our brethren at the Antipodes as never before, the men of China, Japan, and those of Central Asia. All these brethren are drawing nearer to us, and are becoming more and more our neighbors.