

since that so effectual beginning at Herrnhut in 1732, unless we except the work of Coke and the Wesleyans begun in 1786 in Antigua, when driven thither by a furious storm, nothing new had been attempted. And the Dutch missions were now at death's door. The Danish undertaking in Southern India had also fallen into a serious decline. From the beginning the men had come altogether from Germany, and of late the money had been derived wholly from British sources. The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel for well-nigh a century had been raising annually and expending small sums, though mainly upon English colonists, and the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge had been helping with its funds to spread the glad tidings in the Old World and the New. But, taken as a whole, Protestant Christendom had no concern for the heathen; doubted if aught should be undertaken in their behalf; did not believe that aught for their betterment was possible. *Whether Established or Dissenting, not a solitary representative of the churches of Great Britain was found upon earth preaching Christ to those who had never heard His name!*

But yet, though the outlook from this point of vision was sufficiently forbidding, and could scarcely have been worse, all unobserved and out of sight a preparation for better things multiform and widespread had long been in progress, and the set time for the blessed revelation was at hand. In particular the forces of the Wesleyan revival had long been rising and spreading, and had stirred Britain tremendously from centre to circumference. The national conscience had been quickened, and in many thousands the flame of the higher affections had begun to burn. And so Howard, and Raikes, and Clarkson, and Wilberforce had begun to agitate. Then just before an empire had been added in the East, and so a vast heathen population had been thrust upon the notice and the care of the nation; and, moreover, by the voyages of Captain Cook in the South Sea, Islands innumerable, with millions more of wretched pagans, had been brought under the gaze of English Christians. Great industrial and social and political changes had recently come to pass, or were at the door—such, for example, as the steam-engine stands for, and the spinning-jenny, and the cotton gin. And the spirit of freedom, whether civil or ecclesiastical, was in the air of Europe as well as of America. “The age of reason,” “the rights of man,” and “human equality” were phrases full of inspiration to the civilized world, and stood for ideas and entities in behalf of which millions were ready and eager to venture fortune and life itself. And even now it was, and in the very nick of time, that a voice was heard in the wilderness proclaiming that the kingdom of heaven was at hand.

Only a leader was lacking, some human spirit divinely endowed and called to inspire and guide, to supply a centre about which the spiritual forces of the time might crystallize. Nor had the same God, by whose ordinance the glorious work was at length to begin, failed to provide also the thoroughly furnished instrumentality; for, some thirty years before (August 17th, 1761), a babe was born gifted among other things with a