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"SPEAK UNTO THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL, THAT THEY GO FORWARD."—Exodus xiv., 15.

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CONTENTS.

PAGE	PAGE
RELIGIOUS INTELLIGENCE—	Letter of Sec. of London Bible Society.....168
Missions in Western Africa.....161	Statistics of Flamboro Pres.....169
Madagascar.....163	Do. Toronto Pres.....169
Armenia.....165	ORIGINAL ARTICLES—
Address by Dr. Dall.....165	Prayer and Providence.....170
General Notices—	The Church Self-Supporting.....170
Synod, Present.....167	Reviews.....171
Toronto Presbytery.....167	MISCELLANEOUS—
Dennisson.....168	Public Prayer.....172
California.....168	John Huss the Bohemian Martyr 174
Expenditure on Mis. of U. P. Church.....168	How they Educate in Russia.....176
Union, Minutes of Meeting at Whitby.....168	Modern Persians.....176
	Customs of the Turks.....176

Religious Intelligence.

MISSIONS IN WESTERN AFRICA, OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, OLD SCHOOL, UNITED STATES.

Africa is one of the principal missionary fields of the Church. It is one of the darkest parts of the world. Its large population is among the most ignorant and debased of the human family; and yet among the most susceptible of improvement. It is a land easily reached from Christian countries, lying adjacent to Europe, and separated from our States only by the Atlantic. For long periods of time, its chief visitors were those whose business was the infamous slave-trade; but the true light is now dawning on this benighted land and its prospects were never before so full of hope.

On the north, Africa is inhabited mainly by Mohammedans; in the Barbary States and Egypt; but European influences are more and more shaping the direction of public affairs in those countries. Algeria is now subject to France, while Egypt is virtually the British highway to India and the East. A few Protestant missionaries are stationed in Egypt and Algiers.

The whole eastern coast to the southern tropics presents but a single point of missionary labor—the station at Monrovia, a few degrees south of the equator. Some German missionaries, connected with an English Episcopal Society, are endeavoring to penetrate from this place into the interior.

The southern part of Africa differs widely from all the rest of the continent; being a British colony, having a sparse population, and being supplied with relatively a large number of missionaries. Ten European Societies and one American support about one hundred and seventy missionaries among the native tribes in the colony and beyond its limits, with a large staff of teachers and other assistants, and the reports of last year enumerated over 10,000 communicants in the churches. The transformation of character, habits and pursuits which has been wrought among the Hottentots, is truly wonderful, and such as could have been effected only by divine power.

From the Cape of Good Hope northward, through the whole of Central Africa, the Christian's eye rests on no bright place. Abyssinia, towards the north-east, is inhabited by nominal Christians, but amongst them ignorance, superstition, and other marks of an unevangelized people are everywhere visible; while the rest of the interior is the abode of Mohammedans and pagans, numbered by many millions, amongst whom sin abounds and death reigns.

The coast itself, for some degrees of latitude on each side of the equator, and the densely-inhabited regions in the interior to which access can most easily be gained from this part of the coast, form a distinct missionary field. It is in these regions that the mass of the African people live. It is here that Satan's seat is in Africa. Here the door for missionary labors now stands wide open; and here the gospel is beginning to win some of its brightest triumphs.

The greater part of the population of Africa is found within the tropics.

At the north and the south, dry and seldom tracts of the country abound; the rivers are few and the soil unproductive; a large population could not find the means of subsistence. But a different scene appears as you approach the equator, especially along the western coast. The Congo and the Senegal are rivers of respectable size, while the Niger is a river worthy of a great continent. The soil of the country is extremely rich. All kinds of tropical vegetation have a luxuriant growth. And a larger population exists in these regions than is found in the whole of North America, notwithstanding the drawbacks on the growth of population among the Negro races in Africa, occasioned by the long-continued traffic in their own sons and daughters. The Foulahs, the Mandingoes, and the various Negro tribes inhabiting the country from the Senegal southward, comprise many millions of souls. The kingdoms of Ashantee, Dahomey, Benin, &c., contain severally a large population.

In forming an estimate of the spiritual condition of these multitudes, we must distinguish between the Mohammedans and the pagans, though they are equally in need of salvation by faith in Jesus Christ. It is remarkable that the Mohammedan religion has become widely spread in Africa, and also, that it is still extending its conquests, while in Asia it is at a stand, if not on the decline. The Foulahs and the Mandingoes are Mohammedans. Many of the Negroes have also embraced the religion of the False Prophet. This may be owing to their desire of education. Most of the teachers of what little education is within their reach are Mohammedans, and thus the impress of this false religion becomes early stamped on the minds of many of the youth. It has not been by the sword but by the Alphabet that Mohammedanism has spread in equatorial Africa—literally by the Alphabet, for the education imparted seldom goes farther than the mere rudiments. But whatever the education or the belief of these Mohammedan Africans, their morals and practices are little better than those of the heathen.

Paganism in Africa appears under a peculiarly low and debasing form. It has no order of Brahmans, no holy temples, no sacred books. It is called Fetichism or Greecreism, which may be defined perhaps as the religion of charms. Its principal idea is that of protection from evil by wearing a fetich, or grasping to charn away the danger, whatever it may be. Anything may be a fetich—a shell, the hoof of a kid, a piece of leather, an ugly carved block of wood, &c. These are worn on the arm, or on the dress, and are fastened in their huts, to guard from sickness, death, the arts of enemies, &c., and to insure success in fishing or in traffic.

Amongst the Negro nations, it is common for men to array themselves in hideous costume, and pass themselves off as dead-men, having the power of witchcraft. The power of these men is greatly dreaded by the ignorant people, and no efforts are spared to gratify them and secure their friendship. Presents are made to them for this purpose. It is easy to see that wicked men can use this pretended power to subserve their own malicious and base passions. Even murder is often committed at their instigation. Another form of African superstition, which frequently leads to the destruction of human life, is the custom of drinking Sango water. This is required of one charged with some offence, as a means of proving his innocence. The water is either rejected by the stomach, or else it proves a deadly poison. Many instances of murder by this process have been reported by missionaries and other writers. But probably the worst effects of African heathenism are witnessed on the death of a king or chief. It is then a custom to put them to death, in order that they may accompany their departed lord into the world of spirits—the number who are thus killed depending on the rank or power of their master. These are some of the dreadful evils which prevail amongst the heathen nations of Western Africa. The more common vices of heathen life must also be enumerated—the prevalence of falsehood and deception; the utter want of pure morals; and the common practice of polygamy, with the degraded condition of the female sex; and all the cruelty, oppression, and loss of life which follow in the train of the horrible traffic in slaves,—so long characteristic of this part of the world. The marauding excursions, the midnight attacks on sleeping villages, the burning houses, the screams of terror from helpless women and children, the murder of aged and feeble persons, the breaking up of families, the savage treatment of captives, the hurrying and cruel march to the sea-coast, the heartless sale to heedless foreigners, the horrors of the "middle passage," these are scenes better worthy of