

JOHN KNOX AND THE MISSIONARY CAUSE.

BY REV. DR. PATTERSON, NEW GLASGOW, N.S.

In the February Number of the RECORD several aspects of the life and work of Knox are presented. There is one other point of view in which I should like to bring him under the notice of your readers, and that is his regard to the salvation of the world, or what is now called the Missionary undertaking. The Reformers had work enough to do in delivering their respective nations from Romish error and Anti-Christian tyranny. But their hearts went forth in pity and desire for the salvation of those in heathen darkness. In this spirit John Knox fully shared. In evidence of this I would refer to his recorded prayers. Thus in a form of prayer "to be used in private houses every morning and evenynge" occurs the following:—

"And because thow haste commanded us to pray one for another, we do not onely make requeste, O Lord, for ourselves and theym that thow haste already called to the trew understandinge of thy heavenly wyll, but for all people and nations of the world, who as they knowe by thy wonderfull workes that thow arte God over all, so they may be instructed by thy Holy Spirit to believe in thee their onely Savicur and Redemer. But for as moche as they cannot beleve except they heare, nor cannot hear but by preaching, and none can preache except they be sent: therefore, O Lord, rayse up faithfull distributers of thy mysteries, who setting aparte all worldely respectes, may bothe in their lyfe and doctrine onely seke thy glorie."

But the Missionary spirit is seen more remarkably in the Confession of Faith, prepared by him in 1560, which was the standard of the Church of Scotland, till the adoption of the Westminster. In the front of it is the motto:—

"AND THIS GLAID TYDINGIS OF THE KYNGDOME SHALL BE PRECHEIT THROUGH THE HAILL WORLD, FOR A WITNES UNTO ALL NATIONIS, AND THEN SHALL THE END CUM."

And at the close he utters a fervent prayer which culminates in these words, "AND LETT ALL NATIONIS ATTEANE* TO THY TREW KNOWLEDGE."²

Upon this striking and instructive circumstance the late Dr. Andrew Somerville, Foreign Mission Secretary of the U. P. Church of Scotland, has the following remarks:—

"The Reformer just touched the missionary principle, and stopped. His heart, glowing under the influence of the expansive doctrines of free grace which the Confession had detailed, and which delineate that knowledge of God which gives eternal life, breathed the wish, 'And let all nations attain to thy true knowledge;' and he ceased to write, feeling, like David, that his prayers were ended.

"There is something deeply touching as well as nobly beautiful in this fact. The large mind of the Scottish Reformer, panting for the spiritual welfare of his country, becomes so filled with admiration of the precious and life-giving truths which he had enumerated, and which form the gracious scheme of salvation which is needed by all men, that, looking abroad over the perishing world, he cries out, 'And let all nations attain thy true knowledge.' Never did John Knox rise so high, or exhibit so distinctly the world-wide benevolence of the Gospel, as he did at that moment, for then he appeared as the true servant of him 'in whom all the families of the earth are to be blessed.'

"The entire history of modern missions is just the expansion and the application of that closing prayer of the Scottish Reformer. The missionary, therefore, is the genuine successor of Knox. He takes up the work where he left it, and goes forth to accomplish in deed what Knox uttered in wish, 'That all nations may attain to the true knowledge of God.'

"And as this was the last sentence of the Confession,—the crowning wish of the Reformer,—so will the Reformation receive its due and complete development, when, through the agency of the missionary enterprise, all nations shall have attained the true knowledge of God, and are brought to rejoice in him who is God's 'salvation to the ends of the earth.'"

* Later printed copies have "cleave" instead of "attain," but the MSS. copies have the latter, and it is so printed in Laing's edition of the Reformer's works. The alteration shows that some of those who came after Knox had not his broad views.—G. P.