

originated within the last sixty years. God's blessing upon this instrumentality, in the first shall be materially modified, if not entirely removed.—*New York Spirit of Missions.*

THE EIGHTH TRIENNIAL AND TWENTY-FOURTH ANNUAL SERMON.

Preached before the Board of Missions, at St. Paul's Church, Richmond, Va., on Thursday evening, Oct. 6, 1859, by the Rev. G. T. BEVELL, D. D., Assistant Bishop elect of Ohio.

What hath God wrought? NUMBERS XXIII.

Majestic are the footsteps of God. History is but the record of them. The history of Missions is their clearest development. For as the great purpose of God, in moving among the events of time, is, through them, to work out the regeneration of mankind, and the coming of the kingdom of his dear Son, His presence will always be most clearly perceived in the progressive steps which mark the accomplishment of that purpose. Nor has history a grander province, than, whilst reverentially waiting on the movements of her Lord, to trace, in every one of them, the systematic working out of one intention, the progress of the gospel.

Slow paced are the footsteps of God. For twelve hundred years Mohammedanism has coiled itself round the Christianity of the fairest centre of the earth. Contemporaneously, Romanism has poisoned, with her corrupting breath, the once vigorous life of churches which were the noblest exponents of Christ's religion. Yet for twelve hundred years the seed of the woman has withheld his heel from treading on the heads of those serpents. For twice twelve centuries heathenism, under various forms, has been wielding an absolute sceptre over three fourths of the population of our globe. Yet, until within less than a hundred years, that sway has been almost uninterrupted. When the Jesuits carried their form of Christianity into China, two hundred years ago, the only result was positive prejudice against "the religion of the Lord of heaven." After a brief influence, their cathedral in Peking was destroyed, their property in various quarters confiscated, and themselves were ignominiously banished. So in Japan; although Xavier himself preached there the religion of Jesus, and subsequently thousands were baptized, yet before many years the Emperor quenched the embers of Christianity in the blood of a quarter of a million of Christ's nominal followers, and felt himself strong enough to boast that, "were the God of the Christians to set his foot upon their shores, he would put him to death." More than a hundred years ago Protestant Christian England carried the name of Christianity into India; yet, we have seen the centennial anniversary of her dominion celebrated there by inhuman orgies of paganism and infidelity. The vast continent of Africa, until within our memory, was left as the undisturbed abode of devils.

As to our own Continent, as early as the year 1556, the Church at Geneva attempted to preach the Gospel to the Indians of South America; but before the Missionaries had begun their labours, the so-called Christian Governor of Brazil drove them from his shore, and the whole of the South American Continent was left to the almost uninterrupted rule of a degraded superstition. Among our North American Indians, Elliott laboured successfully from 1648 to 1690; and after him, Brainerd and the Mayhews; but the circle of their influence had a small diameter; and beyond it, among these aborigines of our mighty Continent, until within the memory of the present generation, there has been almost total moral darkness. So slowly had the Gospel progressed towards its dominion over the human family, that

in the beginning of the present nineteenth century, not one fifth of the population of the globe had ever heard of a Saviour crucified.

But *steadily progressive* are the footsteps of God. During all these centuries, he was making ready a people who, towards the end of days, should carry his Gospel to a triumphant conclusion.

In the very first century, Christ was preached in distant Britain. In the fifth century, the Gospel was introduced into Ireland. In the sixth century, the harvest from that seed sowing, began to be reaped by Missionaries sent from Gregory of Rome into England. In the seventh century, the Anglo-Saxon Kings began to be nursing fathers to the Church, and Christianity had such hold upon the national character, that Missionaries went forth from each of the three kingdoms, England, Ireland, and Scotland, to carry the Gospel to the heathen. Then came centuries of darkness; though darker every where than in Great Britain. Through all that long age, however, the Anglo-Saxon mind was being formed, by the mixing of bloods, by hardy adventures, by series of trials; its enterprise, its endurance, its firmness of purpose, were becoming fixed facts. Then came the glorious era of the Reformation, when the Anglo-Saxon heart became imbued with pure principles of Christian truth: principles from which, by the grace of God, neither temptation, nor prosecution, nor prosperity—more to be dreaded than either—have been able to separate it. At the close of that same sixteenth century, and throughout the seventeenth, occurred the great diffusion of this Anglo-Saxon race. Different portions of our North American Continent were settled by those who represented the various elements of its character, left here to repeat the process of wholesome amalgamation. The race found in it a land a new home, and an independent centre of influence. During the eighteenth century, that race reached essential political liberty and freedom in maintaining and expressing individual opinion; principles of incalculable importance to the work of Missions, for which God was preparing them. During that century, under the impulse of free thought, this race traversed every part of the globe, carrying home to England and America the profits of its toil. These profits became that wealth of the nations on which God intended that the great Missionary enterprises of this, the succeeding century, should be based.

It is a noticeable fact, too, that during the last century (the eighteenth) only minor efforts were made to spread the Gospel. They are to be regarded in the light of experiments, such as always precede the settlement of great principles. Such were made by the Dutch, and Germans, and most nobly by the small but devoted body of Moravians. Some efforts were also put forth by the English, through the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, and not a few by their Colonists on this side of the Atlantic. But the chief result of these experiments was to settle in the Anglo-Saxon mind a conviction of the possibility of successful Missions. It is a characteristic of that race to undertake nothing until convinced that it is possible; and to lay down nothing possible, until it is accomplished. So that, when, at the beginning of this nineteenth century, this conviction fastened on the Anglo-Saxon mind, in England, prosperous, rich, and mighty, and in America, free, and rapidly increasing in wealth and power, there sprang at once into existence a multitude of independent but co-working efforts for evangelizing the world. The Bible and Tract Societies, and, with one exception, all the great Missionary Societies of England and America have half of the present century, sufficiently establishes its fitness for the work. When the spirit shall be poured out upon us from on high, to give it

entire efficacy, we may reasonably hope to behold the conversion of our ransomed race.

This hath God wrought, slowly, but with steadily progressive steps, preparing, through eighteen hundred years, for those rapid strides in Missions which our eyes are now privileged to look upon in this Missionary era.

I have drawn this brief sketch to forestall the objection which is suggested to our impetuous claims by the hitherto tardy advance of Christ's cause.

And then I turn to show that, during the last half century—especially during the past few years—the age which God has waited for, and for which the Church has prayed, the progress of the missionary work has been rapid beyond precedent, and even beyond the belief of many slow-hearted Christians. The results have been sufficient to answer every cavil, and to re-assure the most timid faith. I give you facts to-night. And as we study them, I trust that they will appeal to us not in vain to lift up our hearts in devout thanksgiving for what the grace of God hath wrought.

In order fairly to estimate missionary triumphs we must understand something of the obstacles they encounter. Beside that which lies in the sinfulness of the human heart, and its unwillingness to receive the gospel, and which applies alike to all fields, Domestic and Foreign Missions each experience difficulties peculiar to themselves.

First, as to the domestic field. Consider for a moment, and endeavour to grasp the idea of the immense territory which our domestic missionaries are expected to occupy. West of the Mississippi, which by no means includes all our home field, there lie two million square miles; whilst our settled country this side of that river, including our dioceses which are not missionary ground, contains only 900,000 square miles. Our domestic missionary field is larger than China or Hindostan, larger than Russia in Europe, much larger than the rest of Europe, excluding Russia. But the comparative sparseness of the population is a much more serious difficulty, rendering the proclamation of the gospel very laborious, less encouraging than where thousands may listen to a single missionary address, and depriving our missionaries of the stimulus presented by crowded auditories. Still further, I use the striking statements of the Home Missionary Society, "a more heterogeneous mass is not to be found on earth, than meets our missionaries in the west. It is brought together from various continents. It is aggregated from various nations. Irish, Germans, French, English, Scandinavians, Hollanders, with a sifting from almost every other European realm, and numerous representatives from many an African tribe, mingle with the sons of our Atlantic border. The German democrat and the French socialist find themselves side by side with the staid republicans and puritans of New England. Protestant and Romanist, Rationalist and Presbyterian, Lutheran, Baptist, Churchman, the Jesuit and the Hard-Shell, the Mormon and the Soul-sleeper, find themselves brought into necessary intercourse, and mingle on terms of equality."

(To be continued.)

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