

of popular education, in common schools and Sunday-schools ; the whole system of publication of Bibles and religious books and tracts ; the vast array of hospitals, asylums, and benevolent institutions ; the thousand forms of philanthropic work among the destitute and depraved classes—these, as we have already said, are inventions of man. However wise or good, their origin is human and their methods fallible. If at any time they have answered their purpose, cease to be effective, or need to be modified, man is competent to alter or abolish them, and consequently disciples are at liberty to determine how far they shall give them personal aid and support. To criticise them is no irreverence ; to change their forms of work or displace them by better is no profanation.

But the cause of missions has God for its original author. It is traceable solely to His wisdom. His eternal counsels are back of it, and His almighty power is pledged to its support. To accept it as His plan and fall into our own place in that plan is both duty and delight to a true follower of God. To criticise or condemn missions is blasphemy ; to abandon and abolish this work would be the last step in arrogant apostasy. In fact, we cannot *abolish* tho we may *abandon*, for God is behind it. We may drop out of it as His instruments, but He will raise up others, if need be calling another eagle from the far East to do His pleasure. But as sure as God lives, the work of a race's regeneration will go on. His word and His oath are already pledged :

“ As I live, saith the Lord,
Unto Me every knee shall bow
And every tongue shall swear.
The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord,
All flesh shall see the salvation of the Lord.
I, the Lord, have spoken it,
And will do it.”

Such is the sublime and wonderful teaching of this text, and the whole Scripture of which it is both climax and index. Here is the one work of God, known unto Him in eternal purpose, and in which from the very opening of the ages He has been engaged and will be to the end. To take part in it is to wheel into our orbit, moving about Him as a center, and have share in the sure and splendid triumph which awaits Him and toward which, through all seeming reverses and defeats, He moves steadily onward, as receding waves only rise at the next advance higher toward the final flood-mark, or apparent retreats under a master general are only parts of a larger movement for surrounding and annihilating a hostile army.

This thought is so grand and glorious that it may well occupy closer attention, and happily the context itself suggests some of the details which together exhibit this as God's work even to its minutest details. All its outworking shows His hand.

Careful students of the Word have often found here not only God's