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

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## Religious Intelligence.

### MISSIONARY LABOURS UNDERTAKEN IN FRANCE TO SPREAD THE GOSPEL AMONG THE HEATHEN

BY THE REV. J. H. GRANDPIERRE, D. D., MINISTER OF THE REFORMED CHURCH, PARIS.

The agents of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society make collections amongst the members of their flock in France, in order to help the Wesleyan Missionary Society, which has its centre in London. They hold a public meeting every spring at Paris, in which they give an account of the operations of that Society. But as this is an English Society, it does not belong to us to speak of it here.

We have also grounds for thinking that the Moravian brethren, who have some agents in France, do the same for the Missionary Society of the United Brethren, whose centre is at Herrnhout, in Saxony. This Society being German, we need not give an account of it in these pages.

There exists but one French Society, which up to this time has prepared and sent out evangelical missionaries to the heathen, and that is the "Société des Missions Evangéliques chez les peuples non Chrétiens établie à Paris."

This Society has all the character of the Evangelical Alliance, for it is not the work of the Reformed churches, nor of the Augsburg confession, nor of the dissenting churches; it is the work of all these churches together, for they all take part in it. The directing committee is composed of members belonging to these three denominations, and the funds of the Society are collected indiscriminately from Christians of all creeds. We have not, therefore, in France, a Missionary Society of the Established Church, or Missionary Societies of such and such dissenting churches. We have but one Evangelical Missionary Society, which all Christians love, and in which all co-operate by their prayers or by their gifts.

The "Société des Missions Evangéliques" was founded at Paris, 4th of November, 1822. During three years, it contented itself with publishing missionary pamphlets, in order to make known a work which had then been unknown to French Protestants, and to collect funds, which were sent to different foreign missionary societies, and amongst the rest to the Bible Missionary Society. But it soon felt the necessity of endeavouring, in a more direct and efficacious way, to spread the kingdom of God amongst the heathen. Three years after its foundation, that is, in the autumn of the year 1825, it opened a Missionary College at Paris, called the "Maison des Missions," for the purpose of preparing pious young men for the duty of the gospel in idolatrous lands.

This institution existed until March, 1845, when financial embarrassments, following up the last revolution, obliged the committee to discontinue it.

During the twenty-two years and a half which this establishment lasted, eighty-two persons were admitted to it, and remained there for a longer or shorter period. Of these eighty-two persons, twelve were foreign missionaries, who labour at this day in different parts of the world, as China, Greece, Palestine, India, North America, the Mauritius, and the Indian Archipelago—amongst these may be especially mentioned, the Rev. Dr. Gutzlaff, and Bishop Gobat; twenty-three left, in order to evangelise the Bechuana in the South of Africa; one is employed among the negroes

in the West Indies, and one among the Arabs in Algeria; fourteen are pastors or ministers of the gospel in France; six are teachers; the others have either entered upon other careers, or are dead; amongst these last, is a doctor of medicine, as much distinguished for his piety as for his learning.

The committee hope soon to be able to re-open an establishment which has been of such imminent service, and on which the blessing of God has so visibly rested. Excepting the missionary who has been recently sent to the French West India Islands, the "Société des Missions Evangéliques de Paris" maintains missionaries only in the south of Africa, amongst the negroes of the Cape, and especially amongst the Bechuana in the north-east of Caffreland.

It counts now eighteen missionaries in that country, almost all of them married; making altogether from sixty-five to seventy persons, including wives and children. These laborers are distributed among thirteen stations, of which these are the names.—Wellington,—at some leagues distance from Cape-town; it is the only station within the limits of the colony; all the others are situated on the shores of the River Calidon and of the Orange River, in the country of the Bassontos, at two hundred miles from the Cape; one of these stations is even three hundred miles off, near Kurunum:—Bethulie, Carmel, Beersheba, Morija, Thaba Bosson, Berea, Hebron, Hermon, Cann, Mekuating, Bethesda, and Melito.

The French missionaries who preach the gospel in the country of the Bassontos are, for the most part, able and earnest men. Their character and their work have been appreciated by men belonging to different churches, and holding different positions in society. Amongst them we will enumerate the Rev. Dr. Philip; Mr. Backhouse and Mr. Walker, Quaker travellers; Mr. Steedman, a merchant, the Rev. Mr. Moffat, the Rev. J. J. Freeman, and the present colonial governor, Sir Harry Smith, who, having visited them at their stations, have borne testimony to their excellence.

The Bechuana population, collected together at the stations, and in their neighbourhood, is about 25,000 souls, the whole country contains more than 40,000.

At each station there is a church, several schools for children and for adults, and a manse.

The missionaries, after having gone through a special course of study of the Sechuana (or Sessonto) language, have translated and printed several portions of the Scriptures, by means of a printing press belonging to the mission; amongst others, the four gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, and the Psalms, also catechisms, collections of hymns, and a great number of reading-books and religious tracts. One of them has written a remarkable work on the Sechuana language, and another has written an account of a journey of discovery amongst the tribes to the north-east of the colony of the Cape of Good Hope.

The French missionaries calculate that since the beginning of the mission they have been the means of the conversion of a thousand persons, who have either died in the faith, or who are to this day setting a good example by their Christian life.

At almost every station, between four and five hundred persons assemble for public worship. On feast days, and when neophytes are admitted into the church by baptism, the chapels are not large enough to contain the crowd, and, at one station, more than a thousand auditors have often met together in the open air, to listen to the message of good tidings of salvation by Jesus Christ. In one year, more than five hundred Bechuana demanded the sacrament of baptism. Amongst the number of converted natives, there are men and women of deep piety, of elevated character, and of exemplary life. Even those who have hitherto felt only the external influence of Christianity, have, little by little, adopted the habits of civilised life. They have abandoned the dirty skins of animals which they used to wear, the grease and yellow ochre with which they used to besmear themselves, and dress like Europeans. Instead of their huts, they build clean houses, with a garden surrounded by an enclosure. The chief of the country, who was but a savage before the arrival of the missionaries, is now a civilised man, and has made treaties with the English Colonial Government.

Twenty years ago, cannibalism reigned in several parts of the country occupied by the French missionaries; now, no traces of it are to be seen, excepting the bones of the victims, which may still be found in the caverns where they were strangled, roasted, and devoured.