

J. G. M. Laughlin

NEW-BRUNSWICK

RELIGIOUS AND LITERARY JOURNAL.

"Glory to God in the highest, and on Earth peace, good will toward men."

VOLUME II.

SAINT JOHN, SATURDAY, JANUARY 23, 1880.

NO. 1.

ANNIVERSARY.

SOCIETY FOR PROMOTING CHRISTIANITY AMONG THE JEWS.

[Continued.]

The Hon. and Rev. G. Noel said it was not his intention to trespass long on the attention of the meeting, but the following resolution had been put into his hands:—

That this meeting rejoice to learn that the circulation of the Scriptures in various languages among the Jews continues to increase throughout the sphere of the society's labours; and they desire to promote to the utmost of their power a full and free distribution of the Sacred Volume among this people, with earnest prayer that it may have free course and be glorified.

He thus proceeded:—"I know no medium of communication from God to man so holy or so blessed as that which is contained in the Scriptures, but I feel that the instrument will not of itself do the work intended—it is like the sword of the giant, which will fall powerless unless it be wielded by a giant's force. But when we recollect that he who gave the instrument pledged himself to the use of it; when we consider that the word of God is the sword of the Spirit, we must believe, that in the wide circulation of copies of that Word amongst mankind, God is putting his own instrument into their hands, and that he himself is coming forth to do his own work—that he who is all powerful is coming to complete that which he had promised for the salvation of a fallen world. Thus, when I see the wide circulation of the Sacred Scriptures, whether amongst Jews or Christians, and when I know that thereby many are brought to God—not by man, but by the whispering of God himself to their souls, I must come to the same conclusion—that God himself is engaged in his own work. The report you have heard, is sufficient to convince you of the great importance of your exertions in this society. Oh, Sir, it is cheering to contemplate the signs of the times as they rise, and to see how they point to the things that are to come; it is delightful to consider that he, who through the Jews, gave light, and life, and salvation to the Gentiles, should make them the means of giving back the same inestimable blessings—that he should make those Gentiles the means of their conversion and restoration: I do not mean nationally, but their being placed in that state of preparation which would fit them for his coming. It is not necessary to the fulfilment of the promise that they should be now restored, as a people, to their ancient land. God promised the land of Canaan to Abraham and his descendants, but it was four hundred years before they obtained it. How did Abraham inherit the land?—by his bones. How did Jacob and Joseph inherit it?—by their bones; and just when the time was about to arrive, and when the promise of God was about to be fulfilled, dread calamity occurred; the condition of the people appeared to be worse. They were unwilling to go forth from the land of their bondage, and they were stubborn and ungrateful to their benefactors.

They had not confidence in the power of God. Moses was stretched in the dust, and called on the name of the Lord; but the Lord said to him—Wherefore criest thou unto me? speak unto the children of Israel that they go forward. And Moses stretched out his hand towards the sea, and caused it to go back by a strong east wind, and the people passed over. Oh, no Sir! there was no shortening the arm of God, for in his own good time it would be stretched forth, his power asserted. God would fulfil his own eternal decree in his own time, and by his own means. We must wait, then, for that time, for the fulfilment of his word." The reverend gentlemen said that the approach of the fulfilment of the Word ought to be a warning to Christians to prepare themselves, so as to rely on the enjoyment of God's promise.

For 4000 years the wisdom of God had left men to their own ways: it was now nearly 2000 years since they received the light of Christianity, and men were still nearly as wicked as ever. But in good time the glory would be restored to the Temple, and Jesus himself would stand in the sight of man, and surrounded by the living and the dead, would make the just sharers in that life which would never die. The reverend gentleman concluded by pouring forth a fervent prayer, that on that great day we might stand favourably in the sight of him, who, though he was our Saviour, was also to be our Judge.

The Rev. Mr. Reichardt, one of the society's Polish missionaries, rose to second the resolution. He anxiously desired to have the power of stating what God was doing for the conversion of the most obstinate sinners, and for bringing them back to Zion, and their Saviour. He would show how the Lord had blessed his labours. One day in Poland, when he had been called on by some Jews who were eagerly desirous of tracts, and of hearing the preaching of the Gospel, he selected the children amongst them, whilst his brother missionary was addressing the grown up people, in order that he might communicate to their juvenile minds some knowledge of the Scriptures; he chose the ten commandments, in which to catechise them in the Hebrew language. While this was going on, several Jewesses entered the room and appeared displeased at seeing their children instructed by a Christian Missionary. That must not be wondered at in those parts, when it was recollected how odious the very name of Christian was to a Jew, where nothing was known but the name of Christianity, and where Christians were regarded by the Jews merely as Baal, or the Egyptians. The mothers insisted upon their leaving the room; the children asked, why should they leave! that they were doing no harm; that they were only repeating the ten commandments and receiving instruction upon them. The mothers listened and were struck; in a short time they went away, but they returned with a number of other Jewesses into the room with cheerful countenances, leading their boys and girls in by the hand, and requesting for them similar instruction. (Hear, hear.)

He began with the first commandment, and during his catechising he put some questions on the necessity of prayer. He asked them, were they in the habit of praying from the heart, or extempore? And here it is to be remarked, that what is known to the Jews generally by the name of prayer, is merely the reciting of a short form in Hebrew, but which very few of them understand. When they understood the meaning of the question, they said, "Oh! no, how should we dare to pray or to suppose that God would hear a poor Jewess. Prayer we leave to our husbands, and we are satisfied if we are allowed to share their supplications." Hearing this, he referred immediately to the first and second chapter of Samuel, which he read to show them a mother of Israel was not afraid that he would not be heard by her God, that she went up to the temple and offered up her prayer, and that her supplication was heard, and that the Lord had given her a son Samuel, who was received by Eli into the ministry of the Lord. When they heard this, tears burst from their eyes, and they said, "Oh! how beautiful is this history; we see there the Lord will answer our prayer; let us take courage." One of them who was especially moved, observed, "I never knew before I was so ignorant, and I will now pray to God to give us his Holy Spirit." When he was leaving them they said, "May the God of Israel preserve you;" and he in return said, "May the peace of the Messiah whom I preach be with you." They replied, "Amen." (Hear, hear.)

The prejudice of the Jews was not to be wondered at, as they had no idea of Christianity except as a system of idolatry; and no wonder,

for in Catholic countries they never saw any thing but idolatry.

The resolution was unanimously adopted.

The Rev. Charles Simeon, in proposing the next resolution said, it had often occurred to him, that one of the best fruits of the Bible Society had arisen from its having begun at home. They ought to do the same thing as respected the Jews that lived in this land; but there were circumstances which rendered such an attempt inexpedient. The report alluded to that, but did not state the objections; he would say, however, that they had hitherto been in want of a proper person for the purpose. Whoever engaged in the office should be one well versed in Divine knowledge, as well as thoroughly conversant in the Hebrew language. Such a man was not to be found in England at liberty, as every minister had his own calling in which he was specially engaged. One worthy and excellent man, the son of a bishop, had been most anxious for the employment, but he was not at liberty. He blessed God, that they had now a person fit and capable, in every respect, for the office, and they not only had him, but in the north-west of England different societies had been formed for the purpose. Two things he would say—first, that this society had not been able to do quite so much as others, yet that it had more ground for encouragement; when he said that, he did not mean to compare it injuriously with the Bible Society, which he highly esteemed; on the ground of thankfulness, he would say that the society had it, because it had obtained a greater victory over prejudice than any other society. The diffusion of truth was always met by prejudice, but no prejudice was so strong as that of the Jew. To such a degree did that prevail, that twenty years ago a Jew would not read any book, or any tract, that came from a Christian; and that when he even heard the name of Jesus, he would spit on the ground with indignation. But now, that was so far done away with, that they pressed for Bibles and tracts, and even received the missionaries with kindness. As to encouragement, they had it, because they already had some success, and they had the prophecies to assure them they could not fail, and, in the eye of faith, the whole world already converted. As to their success, he would merely refer them to those Jews who had been converted at Constantinople, and he asked, Where were the English people who would act as they had done? The reverend gentleman concluded by moving—

That the Jews resid. in within this kingdom have a peculiar claim upon the sympathies, prayers, and exertions of British Christians; that this meeting hear with pleasure of the increasing efforts of this society in their behalf, and trust that the faith, and zeal, and Christian love of all the professed friends of Israel, will yet be called to a much more lively exercise.

The Rev. J. W. Cunningham, of Harrow, said,—"My friend, Mr. Simeon, has looked with pleasure to the success of the society, but I was surprised, in a publication lately sent forth against its objects, to find a sentence, taken as a kind of motto, for the purpose of throwing it into its esteem: "who will sow on a rock?" is this sentence I allude to, and then the book goes on to assume that the operations of this society are but sowing on a rock—that the field of our labours is nothing but a rock—and that, notwithstanding the promises of Scripture, nothing will be done. Mr. Simeon, whose sentiments I love as my own, speaks of the remarkable success of the mission even at home. I say, it is enough for us to have courage, if we rescue but one Jew from condemnation, and make him the heir of life everlasting. I say, it is enough for us if we can pluck one brand from the conflagration, and plant it as a pillar in the temple of the Lord. As to the spirit of conciliation that is working its way amongst the Jews, it happened to me to fall in with one in travelling, and in our discussions I brought him to confess in this way: he said, with regard to the question of religion, we have nothing like a