

The Christian.

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EDITORIAL.

THE GROWTH AND INCREASE OF THE WORD OF GOD.

In the parable of the sower, Jesus says, "The seed is the word of God." Good grain has a life in it which will grow in proper soil. From spoiled grain the vital spark has fled, and no matter where it falls it will not grow. But the word of God never loses the vital spark but lives and endures forever.

The Book of Acts tells us over and over again how and where the word of God grew and increased. When deacons were appointed and the disciples multiplied greatly, the word of God increased—chap. vi. 7. When the angel delivered Peter from the murderous hand of Herod the word of God grew and multiplied—xii. 23. When those who used curious arts burned their costly books before all men, the word of God mightily grew and prevailed.

THE GOOD GROUND

in which the word of God grows to perfection, Jesus says, "*is the good and honest heart.*" It is the good and honest heart of mankind. All Bible teaching confirms this fact. It is not adapted for the heart of angels, good or bad. Pure angels need it not, fallen angels have no part in it. But the seed is for the heart of every fallen man on earth. The Saviour in his last commission solemnly commanded his apostles to preach it to every man in the whole world. No message can be more blessed than this—to tell every dying sinner that he became his brother in order to die to take away his sins and make him a son of God forever. This is not dead seed but all alive with the wisdom and love of God enabling the receiver to cry Abba, Father.

As a rule, a child is more honest-hearted than a man, and he is child-like who receives and retains the living word. The virgin soil is the most receptive of the good seed, so that Jesus explains in fewer words, "the good ground," than he does either of the three wherein the seed was a failure.

The Great Teacher tells us how men prevent the growth of God's Word in the case of the servant who kept his pound "*laid up in a napkin*" or hid from men's sight, and also how the devil prevents its growth, *by taking the word out of the hearts of the wayside hearers.* Satan knows that if the word remains in men's hearts it will grow and by an agency so strong as almost to make him omnipresent, he watches where the word is sown to snatch it away lest men should believe and be saved.

This age is remarkable for its changes, what we suppose some for the better and some for the worse. Among other visitations are the horrors of war. Taking all together we regard them as a foreshadow of a still greater increase of the Word of God.

Why should Great Britain and America, nations that have led in civilization and in spreading the gospel of peace among other nations, engage in

WAR?

America went to war with Spain to gain civil and religious liberty for the people. They have succeeded. Under the American flag these people can read the Bible and worship God according to its teaching and their own conscience. Just as soon as this door was opened missionaries were ready to enter and preach the gospel to the people, circulate the Bible among them, and so the Word of God grows and increases.

Much can be said in favor of this noble war. Not a man was pressed into the army, but volunteers flocked to it in greater numbers than were needed. The conquerors treated the conquered with the kindness of brothers so that many were conquered in the true sense.

Another step would have entitled the army to the eternal gratitude of mankind. Had they made successful war on the whiskey traffic, they would at least have stayed the ravages of that ruthless murderer and have put it out of the power of men to say, "The saloon has killed more men in the Philippines than the war."

The principal reason Great Britain gives for the war in Africa is to uphold the civil and religious freedom of the people there, and to prevent the crushing tyranny of the few over the many. How far this is so and also their success will be determined by the events of time. There are things connected with this war also worthy of special notice. *No one is pressed into this service but every call for men is more than supplied by volunteers, as if the cry echoed from pole to pole, "England, with all your faults, I love you still, and I will not desert your noble Queen who hands a foreign prince the Bible as the cause of England's greatness."* Should England's enemies require a million of men to meet them the million would soon be on hand.

Another feature in this as in the American war is the kindness shown to conquered enemies. Seldom was the like ever witnessed before.

Once more—the *treatment of the whiskey question.* Temperance men are almost discouraged in their efforts to overcome the horrid saloon. Legislators have first refused their help, then promised, then disappointed. Either through cowardice or something worse the law upholds drinking and that curse is on the throne. Lord Roberts, short as he is, stands a towering monument of moral greatness. His withholding liquor from his men demonstrates a wisdom and British valor never to be forgotten. Without liquor they performed a long march and at the close fought and gained a hard battle, and thus proved that all these things can be done better without liquor than with it. It was said of Havelock that he never lost a battle and his men never got drunk. Who can deny this of Roberts?

Should Britain conquer in this war, as we expect, new doors will open for the gospel and missionaries will enter and the Word of God increase under her flag. For the last century this work has been going on and growing continually. In the last decade the money raised and work done by our own people have grown four-fold, and foreign missions are still in rapid growth and gaining public favor. Strange to say some are opposed to sending the gospel to the heathen. They have the Word of God themselves and could not bear the idea of being without it, but think it best not to send it to the heathen. But by the grace of God many have changed in this and now help to send the light to them who have it not. It is for us to decide what we will do, whether to send the Word of God and have it increased or lay it up in a napkin till the Lord shall come. How urgent is the need of examining our hearts and life and actions, for the Judge standeth before the door.

How grand to witness England and America, speaking the same language,—a language speedily filling the earth—and being really members of the same family, drawing closer together and holding up each other's hands in putting down oppression and affording all nations an opportunity of hearing the gospel and embracing the Saviour. Let us rejoice in the fact that God is increasing the power and prosperity of these nations, and plead with him to preserve these nations from wrong-doing and danger. May his Word have free course.

The Rev. Newton Dwight Hillis, pastor of Plymouth Church, New York, had this to say in his sermon, Sunday, March 25th:

The confession of faith says that certain men and angels are foreordained to everlasting death, being particularly and unchangeably designed, and that number is so certain and definite that it cannot be either increased or diminished, and every young man who enters the Presbyterian church has to solemnly swear to believe and teach this frightful view. And every attempt to revise and expel that statement from the creed has been successfully combated by a majority that wishes to retain the doctrine.

It would seem as if a man would prefer to be burned at the stake rather than hold or assert or charge such infinite cruelty upon the all-merciful and all-loving God.

The day the scholastics wrote that chapter in the confession of faith they got the devil confused with God. What! Read the story of Christ's life, love, suffering and death, and then charge God with "particularly and unchangeably designing" the majority of his children to eternal torment? I would rather shake my fist in the face of the Eternal, and fling every vile epithet toward his stainless throne, where eternal mercy sits with the world's atoning Saviour, than lift my hand with that creed toward God's throne and affirm that I taught or believed it.

These words of Dr. Hillis have caused the greatest consternation among Presbyterians everywhere. Dr. Hillis is an ordained Presbyterian minister and presumably signed the confession of faith that he here repudiates. Very few are the people who believe the part of the creed above alluded to, and yet, unless Dr. Hillis withdraws from the presbytery he is likely to be tried for heresy. Perhaps no pulpit in the country will attract attention further than that of Plymouth church, which is the pulpit of Beecher and Abbott, and has been noted for things startling.