

Pastor and People.

HIS TENDER MERCY PSALM LXXX.

BY M. GRANT FRASER

I ne'er could tell just how the shadow fell,
The way had been beset by cruel thorns
That pierced my feet, but oft a mystic light
Made glad my path, the moonlight's quivering beams
Played in the trees and kissed each tender leaf
And rugged stones gleamed with a silver sheen
I learned to bless the road that strengthened me,
For each new pain would make me quick to feel
Another's woe, like to the loving Lord,
Who tasted of earth's griefs that we might find
A human heart on which our souls could lean.
Close by my path a rill flowed, ever glad,
In which I laved my weary, dust worn feet,
And cooled my brow hot with the noontide glare.
Fond love had made the water still more sweet,
For one had said, "Drink, friend, and be refreshed."
To this my song: His tender mercies last;
The Lord is good, by Him all things are blessed—
Thus journeyed on and hearkened for His voice:
But lo! one night the moon's fond face was hid,
And when the sun woke with unsheltered heat,
The stream was dry and my thirst-darkened tongue
Refused to praise. A storm burst o'er my head;
And all the air grew black and pitiless.
I could not say as once—The Lord is good—
Because of parching thirst that sealed my speech.
I only moaned, o'erstep with cruel pain,
And feared lest He misjudged my human strength.
Ah! foolish fear—I stretched my hands for aid,
No answering touch but rending thorns repaid
My eager quest. "What hast thou then forgot?
Wilt Thou not hear in Heaven Thy dwelling place?
O, Thou most just. Where is Thy promise, Lord?
The bruised reed—Behold the smoking flax,
Assuage my thirst"—Then changeless Love replied,
"Ready the cup. Partake, my well beloved,
Thus from my hand. Tears in great measure shed
Thy drink shall be, that thou mayst better learn
All patiently the breaking heart to soothe,
Not to condemn when trembling flesh is frail,
Or faithless proves, but evermore to meet
The erring soul and guide with tenderest ruth
Not to give scorn to weakness, but strong love
That will not fail, that seeketh not her own."
I made reply, "Saviour, Thou know'st best:
What God hath bless'd will be Heaven's wine to me.
But be Thou near, thus ever make me meet
To follow Thee." Saying I took the cup;
My tongue was loosed, "His tender mercies last.
To all His works, The Lord, The Lord is good."

Indore, Central India.

MODERN MISSIONS CONSIDERED AS CHRISTIAN EVIDENCE.

BY REV. PROFESSOR BAIRD, B.A.

(Continued.)

In 1857 William Duncan began work among the Indians of the Pacific Coast in British Columbia. After having won their confidence he established a new industrial village which he called Metlakatla. This was a self-governing community held together by a voluntary pledge taken by each member to live an industrious, cleanly life, regardless of the common interest and of Christian truth. The industries established by Duncan's energy and managed by his tact brought a considerable degree of wealth to the village, and its inhabitants became famous up and down the Coast for sobriety, industry and Christian behaviour. Lord Dufferin declared that the transformation he saw at Metlakatla surpassed belief. The mission has shown its capacity to cope with reverses and though obliged by ecclesiastical difficulties to remove from the old site and begin again, a new village has been established which is marked by a similar method and encouraged by a similar success.

The very briefest and least careful examination of the history of the present condition of missions is sufficient to show how closely *beneficence* is bound up with Christianity. Wherever the herald of the Cross goes, blessings material and social as well as spiritual follow in his train. Christian missions have almost put an end to cannibalism and infanticide in the South Seas. In every land which the ambassadors of Christ have entered they have regarded it as their commission not only to preach the Gospel to the poor, but to proclaim deliverance to the captives and to set at liberty them that are bruised, and accordingly they have either altogether uprooted slavery, or, where it was most widely spread and most powerfully entrenched, they have been in the van of those who have helped to put such restrictions on the iniquitous traffic as can only result in its utter annihilation. Missionaries have prolonged human life by introducing rational methods of treating disease and this has within recent years become a more conspicuous part of their work than ever before, to such an extent that almost every missionary has some training in medical science and many are specialists in this department. Missionaries have reduced languages to writing and have opened the mines of the world's wisdom to those whose uncouth jargon had hitherto been an impassable barrier between themselves and the repositories of human knowledge. They have taught useful arts and trades, have furthered the establishment of Governments and the setting up of such a code of morality as would help on the formation of firm and useful character.

One of the most conspicuous effects of Christianity in this sphere has been the elevation of the character and social standing of woman. The degradation of woman is a mark of

every heathen religion, whether of the Hottentot and American Indian or of the semi-civilized devotees of Mohammedanism or Buddhism—both of which systems add to the practical sufferings and humiliations to which they expose her by systematically excluding her from instruction and proclaiming her without a soul. The result of the influence of missions on the status of woman is that the gentle and refining amenities of domestic life have been made possible and a new word has to be found to express what did not exist before—the idea of home.

Let it be granted that the pressure of western civilization which has opened China for the Bible has opened it also for the opium traffic, and that the enterprise which has explored the Congo and Zambesi has prepared the way for the whiskey trader as well as for the missionary. Let it be granted further that Britain, the nation which has boasted the longest and loudest of an open Bible, has been the foremost too in forcing even upon protesting victims her pernicious staples in trade. These arguments have too much truth not to discount seriously the value of our argument; but let it be remembered that the missionaries cannot be held responsible for what the Government and the traders are doing against their wish and in spite of their vehement opposition—that in every land by both precept and example the missionaries are in the forefront of those who fight against opium and intoxicants, and whatever be the policy dictated by political exigencies or greedy traders, the line adopted by missions and missionaries has always been in favour of introducing movements and articles that are the genuine elements of civilization without any alloy of baser metal.

Temporal benefits, conspicuous as they have been, are but an indirect and incidental result of Christian missions, the great aim of which is to renew the moral nature and bring the blessings of a divine life to the soul. For all who have an eye to appreciate results of this kind, the benefits effected by missions are seen at once to be marvellous. Conscience works in the South Sea Islanders as well as in the Caucasian, and for every heathen the disquiet and fear which are the natural portion of the life when duty and conscience are continually at war, are augmented a hundredfold by the terrors of a superstition which conjures up an invisible enemy in every thunder cloud. These superstitious fears which drive the agonized worshipper to self-torture or to the offering of human sacrifice, it is within the power of the Christian religion to allay, and the missionary comes to bless by bringing peace where before there was no peace—bringing light where not only all was dark, but it was darkness peopled by horrible and threatening forms. This is the negative side. The positive is that the acceptance by the savage of the good news brought by the missionary means the purging away of sin through the purging away of the world's sacrifice, the new-creating of the heart in the image of Jesus Christ and the opening of a new life of purity and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.

These are the beneficent results of missions—these exhibit the harmony there is between the character and the works of God. He who is love shows that the communication of Himself to His creatures results in the ingrafting in them of that mind which is in their Master.

These are not the prejudiced and partial reports of those who have a case to maintain; they are not the hallucinations of good men who allow their wishes and their ideals to control their judgment. They are supported by the testimony of men of the highest character who had no assignable motive for colouring the truth and who, as explorers, as travellers, or as Government officers, have had occasion to visit the scene of missionary labours.

Lord Lawrence, while Viceroy of India, reported, "Notwithstanding all that the English people have done to benefit India, the missionaries have done more than all other agencies combined." The Blue Book of the Government of India (1885), in speaking of missionaries, says: "No statistics can give a fair view of all that they have done. The moral tone of their preaching is realized by hundreds who do not follow them as converts. The lessons which they inculcate have given to the people new ideas, not only on purely religious questions, but on the nature of evil, the obligations of law and the motives by which human conduct should be regulated. Insensibly a higher standard of moral conduct is becoming familiar to the people."

Charles Darwin, that prince of careful and critical observers, whom no one will suspect of being unduly prejudiced in favour of Christianity, visited in early life the island of Terra del Fuego, and found the natives so degraded that, according to his account, they were scarcely above the dividing line which separates man from the brutes. Not long after a Scotch sea-captain—Allan Gardiner—volunteered as a missionary to the most abandoned heathen, and became the herald of the Cross to these Patagonians. After several years of service he died with his few followers of starvation, without seeing the fruits of his labour. When his body was found there was scrawled on the rocks above his head his dying testimony: "Wait, O my soul, upon God, for my expectation is from Him."

That "expectation" was not disappointed, for the after success of the mission was so astonishing that when Darwin visited the place again not long before his death he saw such a revolution in the habits and character of the natives that he wrote a letter asking to become an annual subscriber to the mission.

Such are some of the results and such are some of the testimonies to the results of missions. They have undoubtedly benefited results. As a civilizer Christianity is unsurpassed, but my contention requires me to go much further than this. To have established as an incontrovertible fact that Christianity working through its missions does good wherever it goes is valuable confirmatory evidence, but it is not the strongest argument we can get from the field of modern missions in favour of the validity of Christian truth. The history of these missions proves not only that Christianity is full of beneficent works, but it proves what is more directly to the point of this argument, that Christianity is a religion from God. There is scarcely any part of all the cycle of arguments in favour of Christianity that shows a stronger proof of the divine character of its claims than that furnished in connection with missionary effort at home and abroad. Ours is a Gospel that commends itself—it possesses self-evidencing power. The missionary had found that his best course of procedure is to disarm prejudice as far as possible by medical or other assistance—and then allow the Gospel, told in the simplest language, to do its own work. It is a superflu-

ity for the missionary to commend it. With that peculiar self-adapting power which it has brought from its home in the skies it is its own best proof—among degraded savages amid the ancient civilizations of India, China and Japan, in the slums of great cities, among the scattered pioneers of western prairies, missionaries give concurrent testimony that it justifies itself as a message from God. Moffat tells of a South African compelled almost involuntarily to exclaim, "That is the truth; that is what I want." A missionary to India tells of a devotee to whom came the message: "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanse us from all sin." He threw off at once the spiked sandals which marked with torture every step in his way to some holy city, and with the words, "That is what I need," begged to know more of that living way which has been opened up by Him who by bearing the sin of the world has made the yoke easy and the burden light for all who follow. Japanese who for the first time listened to the Bible account of the moral condition of non-Christian people declared that the missionary must have forged the record after making acquaintance with their national life. The very same charge has been laid against the missionaries in Uganda. If peoples such as these—wide as the poles asunder in history, spirit and civilization—thus plead guilty indirectly to the same charge and in course of time find healing in the same cure—who will say that missions do not show the Gospel to be the power of God unto salvation?

Christianity is a religion of universal adaptation. There is no man of whatever age or whatever clime who may not obey its precepts and practise its rites. How different with Hindooism, whose sacred books forbid the destruction of animal life and so condemn the man who drinks a drop of water. The Hindu must either defy the microscope or admit that his gods know nothing of the infusoria. How different from Mohammedanism, which imposes on its votaries a fast from sunrise to sunset during the month Ramadan and so proclaims that it was never intended for those regions where the sun is above the horizon for weeks at a time.

Thus far from the positive side have we seen the evidences in favour of divine character of Christianity as exhibited in Christian missions. Now let us turn to the negative side.

The contrast between Christian and non-Christian civilization, in morals and in ideals is so great that the elevation from the lower to the higher can be accounted for on no ground other than that it is the power of God. The conversion of a nation to Christianity (not to speak of that of an individual) is a change so radical and is exemplified in peoples so diverse intellectually and socially that all attempts to account for the change by explanations which eliminate the supernatural are doomed to failure. The magicians of the world have never been able to duplicate these marvels with their enchantments. Look at the changes that have come any time within the last 1,800 years where those who turned the world upside down have persuaded any nation, however debased, to accept the doctrine that God is a God of love, that Jesus Christ died for men and that He asks for a life of purity and loving obedience. What a transformation—human sacrifices, blood-revenge and public immoralities are prohibited, and their places are taken by brotherly love, forgiveness of injuries and a simple but far-reaching code of morality of such a character that the wisest of the heathen philosophers reached its low-water mark at but one or two points.

Christianity has a rejuvenating effect upon the life and development of any race that accepts its doctrines and follows its precepts, and it is the only system of which the same can be said. A minute and critical study of history shows rather that among the nations of the heathen world there is and has always been a tendency to sink lower from an earlier and relatively purer knowledge of God. The reason for this deterioration has without exception been found to be the tendency to gloss over sin, to lull to sleep the accusing conscience and to drive to a distance the holy God. Accompanying this religious decadence step by step we find deterioration in civilization and culture. The Aztecs, the vanished races of Mexico and Peru, as well as ancient peoples of Egypt and Assyria, furnish proof positive that remote antiquity was for them the period of highest and most widely-spread civilization. These were civilizations that had no leaven of Christianity, and what has become of them? The ancient civilization of Egypt has passed away and many of her marvellous secrets and mechanical processes have disappeared so completely that they have not yet been rediscovered. We can rummage through the inscribed tiles that constitute a public library or the records of a government office or of a merchant's counting-house among the ancient Assyrians; we find bank cheques and promissory notes and much of the machinery of a complex system of commerce, but the descendants of that people, if there are any anywhere to be found, have lost the arts of their fathers, and the civilization of the ancient people of Assyria like that of the ancient Peruvians and the Aztecs and our own mound-builders is now only known by its ruins. These ancient civilizations are all alike in this, that departure from God operated in the direction of barbarism. It is quite within the power of humanity to let slip and lose the blessing it has inherited; it is quite beyond that power to win again the knowledge that has been lost.

The history of modern missions being so short—covering scarcely a century—this process of deterioration cannot be shown in the history of nations. A hundred years is too short a period in the lifetime of a people to exhibit the beginning, progress and consummation of any tendency; but the Home Missions of our own land abound unfortunately in illustrations of the same tendency in individuals for whom a short five or ten years of being left without religious ordinances is often enough to degrade a formerly reputable member of society into a creature more irreclaimably savage than those who are born children of the plains. Men may lose and forget God—they can never discover Him.

This then is the case—That Christianity is a religion that has a supernatural element abundant evidence has been furnished in the fact that its fruits are supernatural and are beyond the power of the world to counterfeit. This argument at each stage is capable of illustration from the history of missions. This is the central argument in the case; an argument buttressed on the one side by illustrations of the beneficent results material and moral of the Christian religion and now to be buttressed on the other by showing that the missions of this century are a fulfilment of prophecy and afford a valuable clue to the interpretation of Scripture.

The teaching of *prophecy* is to the effect that the diffusion of