

P. Cotes
1 Aug 1842.

TWO SERMONS

PREACHED AT KETTERING ON THE 31st OF MAY, AND THE
1st OF JUNE, 1842,

BEFORE THE

BAPTIST MISSIONARY SOCIETY,

AT A
SPECIAL GENERAL MEETING HELD IN CELEBRATION

OF ITS

FIFTIETH YEAR;

WITH AN ACCOUNT OF THE MEETING.

LONDON:

SOLD AT

THE SOCIETY'S HOUSE, 6, FEN COURT, FENCHURCH STREET;

AND BY

HOULSTON AND STONEMAN, 65, PATERNOSTER ROW.

1842.

AN ACCOUNT,

&c. &c.

Two events have taken place in our country, which, however much they may be overlooked or despised by the irreligious, are exerting, and will continue to exert, a mighty and beneficial influence; one, the rise of the Puritans, the other, the commencement in modern times of voluntary and united efforts for sending the gospel to the heathen. These events resemble fountains amidst the hills, whose streams, enlarging as they roll onward, enrich whole provinces, and give animation and prosperity to villages and cities.

“It shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow unto it.” This is the unchangeable truth of God, and must be accomplished; and whatever promotes the progress of that kingdom, which is to extend its triumphs and its blessings through the whole world, deserves attentive regard, and calls for lively gratitude.

The importance of the occurrences connected with the formation of our Missionary Society in 1792, will be felt more and more in proportion as their results are developed, and the principles and objects of the pious and excellent men engaged in them are understood and appreciated. They were recipients, and therefore they felt that they ought to be dispensers, of divine mercy. They were the means, in the hands of God, of commencing a movement, bold as the designs of Napoleon, but neither ambitious nor destructive; and romantic as the crusades, but neither superstitious nor visionary. They were exposed to unknown dangers, like Columbus, and resolved to brave them; not through curiosity and love of gain, but in dependence on God, and through zeal for his glory. They united in themselves benevolence and courage, like Howard; but with purposes of mercy still more ample and sublime. In short, they acted as disciples of the Lord Jesus, and in faith and

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prayer took their place amongst his devoted servants, who from age to age have not counted their lives dear unto them; so dear was his honour, and so sweet the prospect of his approbation. It was not, therefore, without reason, that the Committee of the Baptist Missionary Society resolved to celebrate this the fiftieth year of its existence as a Jubilee year, with special meetings and services. Nor was the announcement received without a general expression of satisfaction and pleasure, that the first public general Jubilee Meeting should be held at KETTERING, the place where the Society was instituted. The time fixed upon was Tuesday, the 31st of May, and the 1st and 2d of June.

Kettering is a small respectable town, pleasantly situated, in a landscape diversified by hill and dale and enriched by abundance of trees, about fourteen miles from Northampton. For some weeks previous to the meeting, the Jubilee Sub-committee, in conjunction with the Rev. W. ROBINSON, pastor of the Baptist church, Kettering, J. C. GOTCH, Esq. and his family, and other friends there, were busily engaged in making arrangements and preparations; and committees were formed by the friends at Kettering for providing accommodation, refreshment, and conveyance from the nearest railroad station for the expected visitors. The friends of the Independent denomination, and indeed the inhabitants of the town generally, entered heartily into the business, expressed cordial sympathy with the object, and afforded kind and acceptable co-operation throughout. On Lord's day, 29th May, the rev. A. G. FULLER, who had been invited for that purpose, preached at the Baptist meeting-house in the morning, and at the Independent meeting-house in the afternoon, and the rev. J. RUSSELL preached at the same places the alternate times. All the sermons partook of a missionary character. In the evening Mr. Russell gave a missionary address to the Sunday school children and young people of both congregations, at the Independent meeting-house; and at the Baptist meeting-house a prayer-meeting was afterwards held, which was crowded, and Mr. Fuller gave an interesting address, with touching allusions to his own early days, as connected with remembrances of his beloved and honoured father.

Kettering was the birthplace of WILLIAM KNIBB. He arrived in the neighbourhood on Saturday evening, and paid a short visit to his relatives, and then returned to Northampton, to preach on the Sabbath, and attend a jubilee breakfast, which the Rev. W. Gray and his friends had resolved to hold there on the Monday morning. The breakfast, we understand, was well attended, and afterwards, Mr. Knibb, Mr. Gray, and other friends, came over to Kettering. There

was in the town on Monday a degree of excitement, which continued to increase as visitors arrived on that and the following days. All had looks of pleasure and expectation, which were not the less for being mingled with thoughtfulness consistent with the occasion. As they approached the town from Northampton (if they knew the neighbourhood, or had a companion who did), they would notice on their left a farm-house where the zealous and excellent missionary, John Chamberlain, spent part of his early days; at all events they would think of Fuller, and Gardner, and Knibb, and Toller, and Hall, names so honourable, and directly connected with the place, and of many others indirectly associated with it, and of the mission which there took its rise. The indulgence of these thoughts, and of grateful feelings connected with them, was, we doubt not, in multitudes of cases, a pleasure which alone made it worth while to take the journey. On their arrival, the friends proceeded directly to the house in which the Missionary Society was formed. By the numerous engravings of it the house has become familiar to most persons; but there is nothing like the sight of the thing itself. There it was, a respectable family residence, with old trees about it, and a front garden, and with green fields opposite to it, on the other side of the street. The owners of the property, with great kindness and courtesy, had lent the premises for the accommodation of the Society. On reaching the house, the visitor had to make his way to the front gate through a crowd of idlers, assembled to see what was going on. In the hall he obtained tickets for refreshments, in a room on the right he was directed where to find sleeping accommodation, and in another room he could, when needful, secure a place in a conveyance back to the railway station. And where was the Mission first formed? was the question naturally proposed; and the inquirer was introduced into the "back parlour," which happened then to be somewhat dark, but whence beams of heavenly light have gone forth to the ends of the earth. He was shown, too, the identical table around which the good men sat who are now, we doubt not, most of them—indeed all but one, who still sojourns here below—sitting on thrones of glory above. The room is now larger than when the Baptist Missionary Society was formed there, but the original dimensions are exactly traceable by marks on the floor. There was something affecting in the darkness of the room. Visitors trod softly; they seemed to commune with the departed. They remembered Fuller, and Ryland, and Pearce, and Sutcliff, and Carey. Their thoughts went to distant regions of the east and west; they rose higher, and they rejoiced in the assur-

ance that thousands are before the throne of God and the Lamb, the blessed fruits of missionary enterprise, and they praised Him who is the fountain of mercy, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who put that work into the hearts and hands of his servants, and sustained and prospered them in it. The room was darkened by the tent erected behind the house for the public meeting. At the back of the house, but of greater width, is a spacious and pleasant lawn, with lofty trees along the sides, flowering shrubs between the trees, and a summer-house in the centre at the farther end. This lawn was entirely covered with awning, of considerable height in the centre and sloping down to each side, where it was fastened to the trees or walls, while five rows of poles supported the interior. It enclosed the shrubs, with their beautiful blossoms, and formed an immense area, which was covered with seats, with boards for the feet; gas also was laid on, ready to be lighted up, and fill the whole place with its brilliancy at the evening meeting. After surveying the tent, many of the visitors took a glimpse of the chapel where Fuller preached, and in the ground adjoining which his dust reposes. It should be mentioned, that close to the mission house is Mr. Gotch's residence, where a large number of friends partook of the hospitable and kind attentions of himself and family. As it was not, however, a meeting of an auxiliary, but of the Missionary Society itself, and as the numbers expected were far greater than any private hospitality could meet, it was resolved to have a public refreshment room, where friends could obtain accommodation, and at the same time have the pleasure of being together. For this purpose the large and convenient British school rooms belonging to the town were fitted up, and they answered admirably. Some fair hands had added grace and beauty to the scene, by surrounding the rooms with festoons of flowers.

The first public service was held on Tuesday evening, in the Baptist meeting-house, which, some time before the appointed hour, was quite full. When the first hymn was given out the strain arose sweetly and solemnly, expressive of the joyous and holy feelings of many hearts. The rev. Dr. Hoby led the thanksgivings and supplications of the assembly, in which the description was realized,

"The saints in prayer appear as one
In word, and deed, and mind,
While with the Father and the Son
Sweet fellowship they find."

And then the rev. Benjamin Godwin of Oxford, although suffering from the effects of a recent fall, preached with great energy, forgetting himself in the excitement of the high and delightful themes on which he discoursed. "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts!" How widely different the calm, sweet, holy service of our God, from the tumultuous and cruel worship of a heathen deity! While the above service took place at the Baptist meeting-house, another similar to it was held at Mr. Toller's, which was also filled. And the rev. ANDREW LESLIE, missionary from Monghyr, preached, from Acts xiv. 27, a sermon replete with interesting and important details respecting the East India mission, and the absurd, impure, and cruel superstitions of the people among whom it is planted.

On Wednesday an early prayer-meeting was held at the Baptist meeting-house. The weather was fine, the morning air fresh and invigorating, and the friends, evidently feeling that it was a suitable preparation for the engagements of the day, crowded to the place, which was completely filled. The revds. John Statham and William Groser engaged in prayer; and the rev. Charles Stovel delivered an address, with appropriate cautions as to the principles by which we should be actuated. Immediately after breakfast the streets leading to the tent were all alive, and streams of people were seen making their way thither. The tent rapidly filled, and it was soon evident that, large as it was, it could not contain all the friends who had congregated together in the town, with those who continued to arrive. Arrangements were therefore made for an additional morning service at the Independent meeting-house. The tent when full presented a fine, noble, and exhilarating spectacle. A deep and sacred pleasure seemed to be felt by the vast assembly, and the faint murmur of friends whispering together sank into a profound silence as one of the ministers rose to give out a hymn. When all united together in praise, and their voices rose as one mighty, swelling, harmonious sound, the effect was overwhelming. The rev. James Acworth, of Horton College, engaged in prayer, and the rev. EDWARD STEANE of Camberwell preached, whose clear and pleasant tones of voice were, we believe, distinctly heard by the whole of that vast multitude. At the Independent meeting-house, praise and prayer having been offered, the rev. WILLIAM BROCK of Norwich delivered an appropriate and animated discourse, from 1 Cor. iii. 21—23. At the conclusion of the morning services, the refreshment rooms were very speedily filled, as well we believe as most of the inns in the town, and many partook of private hospitalities. It

was pleasant to notice the recognitions, as friends from different parts of the kingdom now met together, and congratulated each other on this pleasing occasion. After dinner the interest seemed to reach its height—friends from the country still kept pouring in, till the streets were lined, in some places on both sides, with conveyances of all descriptions, and the centre was literally thronged with persons perambulating the town, previous to the evening meeting. A performance of sacred music took place in the afternoon at the Baptist meeting-house, and a meeting for prayer and addresses was held at the Independent meeting-house, but, though both places were nearly full, the multitudes in the town seemed as great as before. The towns-people generally partook of the enthusiasm inspired by the meeting. The rev. incumbent of the parish courteously ordered the church, which is a fine ancient structure, to be opened for the inspection of the visitors; the bells rang, and continued ringing at intervals during the day; while the town-crier was sent round to announce that the Baptist Jubilee was being held, and the inhabitants were invited to attend. It was found necessary to engage both the Independent and Baptist meeting-houses for the evening, and meetings were held in them simultaneously with the large one in the tent. When the meeting in the tent began, its internal appearance was magnificent. The large platform was crowded with members of committee, ministers, and other friends, with a few ladies. The chair was occupied by the Treasurer of the Society, who had come from London for the purpose; near to him sat the rev. REYNOLD HOGG, aged ninety, the only survivor of those who, in the adjoining room, had formed the Society fifty years before, and every part of the vast area was completely filled. There must have been, we think, 5000 persons present. This multitude of persons, old and young, rich and poor, of both sexes, united in one object, with bright and happy countenances, the clear and beautiful light from the gas, the elegant and sparkling foliage of the trees, the nature of the locality, the recollections of fifty years, the anticipation of the addresses about to be uttered, the presence of William Knibb and Joshua Tinson from the West, and Eustace Carey and Andrew Leslie from the East, and of so many esteemed ministers from all parts of the kingdom, the past successes of the mission, and the prospects opening before us—all together produced a feeling of intense interest and delight not often equalled. And it is sufficient to say, that the expectations thus raised were satisfied: the speeches (which are elsewhere published) were of varied character, but all excellent and appro-

priate; and, at the conclusion of the meeting, the friends separated with only one regret, felt and expressed by many, that it was over. How delightful to the servants of God is the anticipation, that in the heavenly temple they will serve him day and night, without weariness or interruption! Mr. Knibb spoke with his accustomed power, first at the Baptist meeting-house, then at the Independent, and lastly at the tent. The rev. Eustace Carey, John Howard Hinton, Dr. Hoby, and others, kindly went from the tent to the other meetings, and efficiently advocated the claims of the mission; and there were many ministers and laymen whom the friends present would have been glad to hear, if time had permitted.

Early the next morning the friends were seen in groups bending their steps to the British School rooms, where it had been announced the public breakfast was to take place. The rooms, although large, were soon filled; many breakfasted at tables placed in the school yard, under the canopy of heaven; and, as there was unavoidably some delay in supplying these tables with the necessary articles, ministers and other gentlemen, unused to such employment, cheerfully rendered their help in procuring them for their respective parties, and all seemed heartily to enjoy the scene. After breakfast the company adjourned to the tent, when prayer and praise were offered, and, our esteemed friend, Mr. Gotch, having taken the chair, several interesting addresses were delivered. Most of the friends departed at the conclusion of this meeting. Some, however, remained to the following day to enjoy intercourse together; and many labouring men, and persons employed in waiting on the visitors, or otherwise, having been unable to attend the former meetings, requested that a jubilee meeting might be held in the British School rooms on the Thursday evening for their benefit. Mr. Gotch was invited to take the chair, which he kindly consented to do; and a very lively and pleasant meeting took place, enjoyed with the greater zest by many, from a consciousness that they had denied themselves before for the sake of promoting the gratification of others.

The object of this great meeting, or rather series of meetings, was in fact, identical with that of the society; namely, to proclaim among the heathen, in opposition to their false gods, the oneness, the spirituality, the attributes and purposes of the living and true God, and salvation through Jesus Christ from sin and death. An object more important or sublime cannot be conceived. The meeting possessed, however, a special character as connected with the Jubilee. There was the review of the past, and the anticipation of the future; there was praise to God for what he has wrought, and prayer for his

blessing on efforts now making, and hereafter to be made ; and there was a special and generous contribution for objects distinct from those of the usual income of the society, though of the same nature. Joy was felt on account of the translation of the scriptures into the languages of the East, and prayerful wishes breathed for enlarging success in the vast and teeming regions of Hindostan. Many hearts glowed, and tears of joy were shed, at the recollection of the Christian heroism, and noble and persevering efforts, by which the emancipation of the negroes from civil bondage has been obtained, and such multitudes of them delivered from the far more terrible bondage of sin. The strength of the Jamaica churches, and their determination to supply their own expenditure, and assist in missionary efforts, and, above all, the encouraging openings now presented in some other islands of the west, and in the vast continent of Africa, excited the highest and purest delight. There is, indeed, abundant cause for us to magnify the name of the Lord. Let us ascribe all the praise and glory to Him, with more pure and ardent affection devote ourselves to his service, and with deeper humility, and more intense earnestness, supplicate his throne for the outpouring of his Holy Spirit.

The Jubilee meeting at Kettering has been held, and the friends have separated. We trust, however, that they have carried its spirit with them, and will diffuse it through their several neighbourhoods. This great assembly is only the first of many similar meetings to be held throughout the country. May the hallowed zeal which has been manifestly kindled at one be the pervading element of all of them ! A period which awakens extraordinary gratitude is eminently fitted to deepen a sense of responsibility also. It is gratitude that we cherish, and not complacency ; and the exercise furnishes, not a warrant for slumber, but a summons to action. Amidst the far from censurable excitement of times and circumstances, may it be granted us to cherish a more profound consecration, a more burning love, a more glowing hope ; that we may be found not unworthy the position which we occupy, and may be enabled to fill it with corresponding fidelity and zeal !

THE FOLLOWING RESOLUTIONS WERE UNANIMOUSLY ADOPTED BY THE MEETING :—

Moved by the rev. Dr. COX, seconded by JOSEPH TRITTON, Esq., and supported by the rev. A. G. FULLER :—

“ That this Meeting, assembled at Kettering, the birth-place of our Missionary Society, in this, the fiftieth year of its existence, looks back to the period of its formation with devout and fervent gratitude to God on account of that important event, the spirit of prayer which preceded and accompanied it, and the piety, talents, devotedness, and perseverance of its early friends and promoters.”

Moved by the rev. J. P. MURSELL, and seconded by the rev. J. TINSON :—

“ That this Meeting acknowledges the mercy and faithfulness of God, in having sustained the Society through the long period of fifty years, and in having enabled it, notwithstanding the great and frequent difficulties with which it has had to struggle, to attain its present extent and efficiency in the East and West Indies, and other parts of the world ; and desires to express its affectionate sympathy with all our missionaries, in the joys and sorrows connected with their arduous and important work.”

Moved by the rev. W. BROCK, and seconded by the rev. WILLIAM KNIBB :—

“ That this Meeting, while it hails with joy and gratitude the prospects now opening before the Mission, and feels it a privilege to be engaged in the service of God and the propagation of the gospel, would acknowledge the responsibilities connected therewith. It desires, also, to express its cordial approbation of the objects of the Jubilee Fund, and, for their accomplishment, recommends united, self-denying, and generous effort.”

Moved by the rev. JOSHUA RUSSELL, and seconded by the rev. JOSEPH ANGUS :—

“ That this Meeting, recognizing the necessity of the divine blessing to crown human efforts with success, earnestly desires that there may be, in the friends of the Mission and of kindred societies, a stronger faith in God's promises, and more humble, importunate, and constant prayer for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, that the churches at home may be favoured with peace and prosperity, and that all the ends of the earth may see the salvation of God.”

Votes were also proposed and passed unanimously, expressing the cordial and respectful thanks of the meeting to the proprietors of the house and garden in which the tent was erected, for the kind manner in which they had been granted for the use of the Society on this occasion ;—to the gentlemen composing the several committees of accommodation, refreshment, and conveyance, for the valuable services so ably rendered by them ; and to the numerous inhabitants of the town and neighbourhood, including members of the Established church, who, with courteous hospitality, had received and accommodated visitors.

THE GOODNESS OF GOD REVIEWED, AND THE HAND OF
GOD ACKNOWLEDGED.

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A DISCOURSE

DELIVERED AT KETTERING ON TUESDAY EVENING, MAY 31, 1842,

BY THE

REV. BENJAMIN GODWIN.

THE GOODNESS OF GOD REVIEWED, AND THE HAND OF
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A DISCOURSE

DELIVERED AT KETTERING ON TUESDAY EVENING, MAY 31, 1842,

BY THE REV. B. GODWIN.

How many touching recollections are connected with a review of fifty years! This is a large proportion of our "threescore years and ten," and no inconsiderable part of that duration which measures the history of our race. It far exceeds the average length of human life, and but comparatively few of those who are now assembled to commemorate the fiftieth year of this Society's existence can look back to a period so distant as its commencement. And yet there are some of us who can carry back our recollections thus far; but they bring us to the unthinking and joyous days of childhood or of youth. And the interval has passed like a dream; its busy scenes, its constant changes, its stirring events, are now become "a tale that is told." How different are we now to what we were in 1792, and how different is the world in its condition and its prospects! How different is

the position of the church of Christ, and how different is our own section of it! Change has been passing on us, and on every thing beneath the sun with which we are connected, and in which we are engaged. Scarcely is a minister of Christ now found who then sustained the sacred office; a far greater number than the whole population of the globe at any time have gone into eternity. All who were then active and prominent in the world's affairs—the sceptred monarchs, the renowned warriors, the able statesmen, the eloquent orators, the distinguished writers of those days—have sunk into the tomb.

But at that period, while the great mass of the world's inhabitants were absorbed in the cares of this life, busied in the pursuits of pleasure or of gain, maddened with the excitement of ambition and of politics, there were some who looked higher and farther than the interests and concerns of the present state, and who having themselves "been translated from the power of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son," longed with enlarged hearts that others might enjoy the same blessings, and that this celestial kingdom might extend at home and abroad. And among them was a little band of Baptist ministers of this county and its vicinity whose hearts God had touched, who with their respective churches held a monthly prayer-meeting for the revival of religion and the spread of the gospel. One of their number is seen especially active in this holy work—a man of small pretension, but of intrinsic worth—a man of a lowly birth, but of a noble spirit—a man of a cool and steady enthusiasm, whose mind was possessed and engrossed by one large overpowering object, and this was nothing less than

the conversion of the heathen world; and who at length succeeded in diffusing his own sentiments throughout the little circle in which he moved. And this day, this very day fifty years ago, at an association held at Nottingham, this devoted man, William Carey, preached that memorable sermon which was followed by a resolution, that a plan of a society for the conversion of the heathen should be presented at the next meeting of ministers at Kettering; and in this very town, in the autumn of the same year, the Baptist Missionary Society commenced its existence. On this day, half a century ago, the man of God lifted up his voice and cried, "*Expect great things from God—attempt great things for God.*" And the expectation was raised—the attempt was made—and with humble and holy joy we make this year a jubilee, and say,

"THE LORD HATH DONE GREAT THINGS FOR US,
WHEREOF WE ARE GLAD."

This then is that portion of God's word which we shall now make the subject of our discourse, and which you will find in Psalm cxxvi. 3.

So spake the pious Jews in the warm gratitude of their hearts, when they were restored from their captivity. For seventy years they had "hung their harps upon the willows," while "by the rivers of Babylon" they "sat down and wept." But as "the ransomed of the Lord returned to Zion with singing," so unexpected and so great was their deliverance, that "they said among the heathen, The Lord hath done great things for them." And their joyful response was,

“The Lord *hath* done great things for us, whereof we are glad.”

Such has often been the expressive language of the Christian church, when reviewing the wonders of redeeming love; as the salvation which is in Christ Jesus has passed before their minds in all its freeness and fulness, impressed with the riches of divine mercy, and the glory of divine grace, they have said with holy transport, “The Lord *hath* done great things for us, whereof we are glad.”

And have not such sentiments glowed in our hearts, my Christian brethren, and such language risen to our lips, when God has “turned the shadow of death into the morning,” when he has heard our prayers and sent us deliverance; or when under a feeling sense of our own unworthiness, we have reviewed “all the way which the Lord our God has led us,” and, impressed and affected with so much unmerited goodness and mercy, we have said, “The Lord *hath* done great things for us, whereof we are glad?”

But we meet this day especially to make our acknowledgments to God as a distinct part of the Christian family, as one section of the church of Christ. We do not deem it sectarian that the followers of the Saviour who agree in their views of church government, and of the doctrines and ordinances of the gospel, should unite themselves in separate communities for purposes of mutual edification, and to promote the great objects of our common faith. Whatever may be the case at a more advanced stage of the church’s progress towards its millennial purity and love, at present, an amalgamation of all the denominations seems neither prudent nor practicable. Truth has its

claims as well as charity; and while we conceive that in our denominational peculiarities great and important principles are involved, which are essentially connected with right views of the kingdom of Christ, we must remain and act as a distinct portion of the great Christian community; willing at the same time to reciprocate with our brethren who differ from us all the kind offices of Christian charity, and ready to give the right hand of fellowship to all those “who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity.”

Our peculiarities respecting the institutions of Christ appear to us to form the very characteristics of the New Testament churches; we think we can trace their existence in the midst of all the surrounding errors and corruptions of succeeding ages. By many individuals they were held, there is reason to believe, as early as the dawn of the Reformation. Many suffered persecution and martyrdom for their sentiments as Baptists, before the regular formation of Baptist churches in the reign of Charles the First; and from that period down to the present time, our denomination has had to encounter more of popular prejudice and the frowns of authority, than perhaps any other body of Christians whatever. Receding further from the established religion than most of the other forms of Christianity, it has required more of sacrifice to a religious profession. Not only has the world condemned it, and the profane held it up to ridicule, but it has had to endure the frowns and censures of even Christian brethren of the highest worth and greatest respectability. But though it has received but little patronage of the great, or favour of the multitude, yet “the little one” has “become a thousand,” and that

in the most literal sense. The few scattered churches had, in 1790, increased to upwards of three hundred in Great Britain alone, and in 1842, it appears, to full thirteen hundred. When, therefore, we consider the present state of the denomination, notwithstanding all its imperfections, which we feel more disposed to deplore than to deny, its numerous churches in England and America, their fourfold increase in Great Britain within the last fifty years, the number of children taught in its Sunday schools, estimated at from one hundred and fifty to one hundred and eighty thousand, the multiplication of its colleges, the institutions of various kinds which it supports, the talent, and learning, and piety which it comprises, the efforts which it is making to spread the gospel at home and abroad, in the east and in the west,—we may say, in humble and holy gratitude, without the exultation of pride or the sectarianism of a party, “The Lord hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad.”

But it is more especially with reference to our foreign mission that I shall now take up these words. It is on reaching its fiftieth year that, as its friends and supporters, we are now met, and in applying these words to the occasion on which we are assembled, I shall consider,

THE REVIEW WHICH IS TAKEN ;

THE ACKNOWLEDGMENT WHICH IS MADE ; AND

THE SENTIMENT WHICH IS EXPRESSED.

“The Lord hath done great things for us.” This the retrospect of the last fifty years fully bears out.

It is not a little to say that *we have a mission to the heathen* ; that we have been permitted to take a share

in such a work ; that in the onward movement to carry forward the standard of the cross, our banners have been seen among the armies of the Saviour. If while all the other portions of the Christian church were awaking we were found still slumbering ; if they were winning souls to Christ while we remained inactive ; if they were gaining trophies for the Redeemer among the idolatries of the world, while we were supinely sitting “under our own vine and under our own fig-tree ;” if while they were found, each at his post, labouring in the construction of that sacred edifice, “the top stone of which shall be brought forth with shouting, crying, Grace, grace, unto it,” we were saying, “The time is not come, the time that the Lord’s house should be built ;” we might view our circumstances with deep depression, and consider it as a most discouraging mark of God’s disapprobation, that he would not deign to employ us in so great and glorious a work. Blessed be God, this stigma does not rest upon us, this dishonour is not attached to our section of the church. God has mercifully employed us. We have, and we have had for nearly half a century, a mission. “The Lord hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad.”

It is also encouraging to recollect that *the Baptist mission was in the field so early*. I mean so early in the modern movements of religious zeal and enterprise. The last forty or fifty years have been by some designated “the missionary era ;” not because no efforts of this kind were ever made before, but because, during that period, the attention of the Christian church has been more steadily directed to this object, and a far deeper and more general interest excited in

it. It is within this period that Christians have begun generally to feel that it is incumbent on them, without waiting for any miraculous interposition, to attempt the conversion of the world ; and it is not too much to say, that the devoted band with whom our mission originated were among the first to excite this feeling, and, throwing off the trammels of an erroneous theology, which prevented enlarged efforts to extend the kingdom of the Redeemer, to give, some by their writings, and all by their example, a new impulse to Christian zeal. The papal church had always professed a missionary character. Early in the eighteenth century Denmark had sent some devoted servants of God to the western coast of India. The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, together with the Christian Knowledge Society, had done something in our American colonies ; the Moravians had been proceeding with quiet perseverance in their labours of love ; the energetic Wesleyans had made successful attempts in some of the West India islands ; but the formation of missionary societies generally throughout the church, with the specific object of the conversion of the heathen, appears to have commenced with our own. God has highly favoured us in this respect. We deem it an honourable distinction that we were so early in the field. It is among the "great things" which "God has done for us, whereof we are glad."

And it is matter of grateful satisfaction that *the great enterprise has not been abandoned*. There has been much during the fifty years of the Society's existence to prove the zeal, and try the patience, and to put to the test the perseverance both of our brethren

abroad and our friends at home. Authorities have frowned on our efforts, profaneness has lampooned them, a selfish commercial policy has often thwarted them ; to say nothing of the numerous discouragements arising from the very nature of the systems of superstition and cruelty which have been attacked. Missionary life has fallen a sacrifice to the climate, to all appearance, most inopportunistly ; hopeful converts have gone back to idolatry ; success has languished ; pecuniary embarrassments have been threatening ; misunderstandings have arisen among its warmest friends ; but still the bush burning with fire has not been consumed, the mission has been "perplexed but not forsaken, cast down but not in despair." Few enterprises have had to struggle with greater and more frequent difficulties ; but the sacred cause has never been abandoned, retreat from the field has never been sounded ; "Faint, yet pursuing," has often been its appropriate motto ; and now, at the expiration of half a century, we seem to hear the condescending and encouraging voice of the Saviour saying, "I know thy works, and thy labours, and thy patience ; and how thou hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted."

If we mark the progress of our mission from its commencement, either in the East or the West ; if we compare its present condition and prospects with those of the society in 1792, how appropriate does the exclamation of the text appear ! When we consider the few who were then interested in the undertaking, the smallness of their resources, the uncertainty which hung over the experiment, and the many dispiriting occurrences that marked the first few years of its existence ; and then look at its present extent, the

spheres which it occupies, the agencies which it employs, and the openings which present themselves, we feel how just is the language of our text. But without dwelling on topics so interesting, we shall pass on to as rapid a sketch, as concentrated a view, of what has been accomplished, as the case will admit; though I feel, that with the condensation which the limits of a single discourse render necessary, to do any thing like justice to such a subject is a work of no small difficulty.

Fifty years' labour, or nearly so, have been employed in the eastern branch of our mission; large funds have been expended; and what is still more costly, many a valuable life has been sacrificed; and what has been accomplished? Whether it is less or more than was expected, certainly we have not "laboured in vain nor spent our strength for nought."

In the first place, *a large and important amount of instrumentality has been created and set in action.*

This has already begun to produce its results, but it promises, under God's blessing, to effect a still larger and increasing amount of good as years roll on. During the period in review, many missionaries of the cross, both European and native, have occupied various stations in Bengal, in Orissa, in Assam, in the Burman Empire, and in the Asiatic isles. Around all their stations, whether of permanent or occasional residence, there has been a wide itineracy; and in chapels, in houses, in streets, in bazaars, and at idolatrous feasts, the honour of the one living and true God has been asserted, and the proclamation of the glorious gospel has been made to thousands and tens of thousands.

In addition to the preacher's living voice, that

mighty agency the press has, from nearly the commencement of the mission, been at work; and from Serampore, and subsequently from Calcutta, hundreds of thousands of tracts embodying portions of scriptural truth have been proceeding like streams of living water in every direction.

Education has also been considerably extended; an education which has borne on it the evident impress of Christianity. Great numbers of children, including the female sex, hitherto utterly neglected, have thus received more or less of Christian instruction.

But, perhaps, the most important part of the missionary apparatus, which has been brought into action by the agents of this society, has been the translation of the holy scriptures into so many of the oriental languages. To produce a translation of the bible into any one language with requisite fidelity and care, is a work the magnitude of which can scarcely be exaggerated. But when we think of the whole bible translated into eight languages, including the Chinese; the New Testament translated into twenty-six other languages and dialects; and parts of the sacred writings into ten more; when we remember that up to 1832 upwards of 212,000 volumes of God's holy word had issued from the Serampore press, and add to this what has since been effected by our brethren in Calcutta in carrying onwards to perfection many of these versions, and bringing the whole number of volumes of the sacred scriptures printed up to 430,000; who can forbear exclaiming, "What hath God wrought!" Channels have thus been cut, in which the word of life may run through districts inhabited by four or five hundred millions of the

human race. All this, it may be said, is but instrumentality; but it is instrumentality precisely of that kind which God himself sanctions, and on which we may expect his blessing.

The amount of good already apparent as resulting from these labours of love, is by no means small or uninteresting. Some hundreds of idolaters have "turned from dumb idols to serve the living God." Many have died rejoicing in Christ Jesus as their hope and Saviour; Hindoos of every caste have sat with Moslem converts and Europeans around the table of the Lord; and a goodly number of those who were once heathens are now engaged in publishing the gospel to their fellow-countrymen.

Encouraged and stimulated by the labours of our missionaries, others have entered on the vast field in still larger numbers, in whose zealous and successful exertions we most cordially rejoice.

And the indirect results of these missionary labours are by no means inconsiderable. With other concurring causes they have, doubtless, had a powerful influence in producing many ameliorations in the condition of the Hindoos. Infanticide has been abolished, the burning of widows has been prohibited, and thus thousands of lives have been annually saved. Many institutions of a benevolent kind have been established, schools for the education of children of both sexes have multiplied, and general knowledge has greatly increased. As the consequence of all this, the alteration that is now going on in the Hindoo mind is confessedly great. The prejudice against Christianity has been weakened, the loss of caste is becoming less terrific, the fabulous legends of Indian

mythology are sinking into contempt, and this idolatrous system, so artfully devised, and so completely identified with all the institutions of the country, which had received the veneration of twenty centuries, and which, like a citadel of the prince of darkness, frowned defiance on opposition from its hitherto impregnable bulwarks, is shaken and breached, and gives symptoms, many and indubitable, that the day of its fall is hastening on.

In estimating these results there are two considerations that must be taken into the account.

1. *The immense difficulties that stood in the way of our eastern mission.* These were of a nature so formidable, that nothing but a steady faith in him who has "all power in heaven and in earth" could have induced our early missionaries to face them, or, having once encountered them, to persevere in their attempt. Languages of very difficult acquirement met them at the very threshold of their labours; the intellectual and moral habits of the Hindoos were in the highest degree unfavourable to the reception of Christianity; the Brahmins, who had every thing that was dear to the pride and power of a priesthood to lose by the prevalence of the gospel, had an ascendancy over the Hindoo mind scarcely equalled by that of the papal ecclesiastics in the darkest ages, or the Druids of the ancient Britons; and the institution of caste by which "the soul and all its powers were bound to Brahminism," as "by an indissoluble and adamantine chain," was pronounced to be "an invincible barrier to the proselytism of the Hindoos;" so that an eloquent opponent of our mission declared in parliament, that "some new power, hitherto undiscovered in the

moral world, and equivalent to that which the old philosopher required in the physical, would be requisite to pull down this consolidated fabric of pride and superstition, which has stood, unmoved and undecaying, the sudden shock of so many revolutions, and the silent lapse of so many ages."* Added to this was the extreme jealousy of the Indian government, and its determined hostility to missionary movements, together with the irreligion and profaneness of European residents, and the suspicions created in the minds of the government at home, by those who, having returned from India, and professing a perfect knowledge of the condition and character of the natives, declared that "every European throat would be cut, if the missionaries were encouraged, and the attempt at conversion persisted in;"† and proclaimed in the British senate the utter hopelessness of an enterprise which none but mad and ignorant fanatics could be induced to undertake. "Will these people," asked the gentleman already quoted, "crawling from the homes and caverns of their original destination, apostates from the loom and anvil, and renegades from the lowest handicraft employments, be a match for the cool and sedate controversies they will have to encounter, should the Brahmins condescend to enter into the arena against the maimed and crippled gladiators that presume to grapple with their faith? What can be apprehended but the disgrace and discomfiture of whole hosts of tub preachers in the conflict?"‡

Considering, then, the stupendous difficulties of

* Speech of CHARLES MARSH, Esq., July 1st, 1813, on the East India bill, revised for publication by himself.

† Ibid.

‡ Ibid.

such an undertaking, the very limited resources which this society could command, and the humble agency which it employed;—that with such means, and such difficulties, and such prospects, so much has been already accomplished, we cannot but acknowledge that "the Lord hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad."

And 2. In judging of the importance of what has been achieved, we must not forget *its relation to the future*. If not a single soul had yet been converted from idolatry, still a great work would have been accomplished. Preparation for future usefulness has been made on a large scale. And this was required by the very nature of the enterprise. Look at India, with its 130 millions of inhabitants, its forty or fifty languages and dialects, its superstitions, identified with all that is venerable in remote antiquity, and touching in domestic associations, and exciting in voluptuous sensuality, and awful in the power invested in the priesthood over the present and future destiny of man; how wide is the field which is to be cultivated, how much is to be done before the seed can be sown. An immense moral jungle is to be cleared, overgrown, entangled, infested with venomous serpents and beasts of prey. Is it nothing that a commencement has been made; that at various points clearances have been effected; that the necessary means of prosecuting the work have been so extensively provided; and that it has already been proved to possess a soil requiring only due cultivation to become highly productive? Do we think nothing has been done, when the deep foundations of a large building have been dug, and ample materials collected for the erection of the

superstructure? though this may have cost more time and labour than the erection of a whole street of cottages. By far the most important object that missionary efforts have hitherto accomplished in the east, is the preparation which has been effected for future and more extended operations in the evangelization of India and its neighbouring nations. But yet, in the converts which have been made to Christ, in the churches which have been formed, in the native preachers already raised up, the earnest has been given of what may hereafter be expected; the "first fruits" have been gathered in, and a glorious harvest will follow. We are fully justified, then, even in this stage of the great work, in saying, "The Lord hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad."

If we turn to the *West*, we shall have to review a much shorter period—to contemplate a narrower sphere; but we shall still see that we have much to be thankful for, and that "great things" have been done. Since 1813 our brethren have been called to labour there. The soil seemed, indeed, very unpropitious, but it has already yielded no ordinary harvest. The negro population of the West Indies were crushed beneath the iron hand of a ruthless despotism that in every possible way degraded the mind, while it exhausted the physical powers, so that their oppressors were compelled to deny them the attributes of humanity, in order to justify their worse than brutal treatment. "Having no hope and without God in the world," without comfort from heaven above or on the earth beneath, herding together like the beasts of the field, they were worked and flogged, and bought and sold, like labouring brutes.

Thirty years have not yet elapsed, and "what hath God wrought!" Amidst difficulties the most disheartening our devoted brethren laboured on; in spite of reproaches, and scorn, and toil, onward they still went. In every direction the foul demon of slavery with his whips, and chains, and branding irons, crossed their path, and scowling on them, bid them desist; and, determined to exclude them from a domain peculiarly his own, he burned their chapels, scattered their flocks, imprisoned their pastors, and sang a pæan of malignant, but premature, triumph. And what do we now see? Slavery itself expelled, the gospel of Christ extending, chapels being erected in every direction, schools multiplying, churches increasing, negro villages rising, nearly 30,000 members of our Christian societies, almost as many inquirers, and among that long persecuted race a spirit of zeal and liberality displayed which British Christians might with advantage imitate. And in them, Africa has hope: their sympathies are now with their father-land, and they give promise of becoming useful pioneers in evangelizing it.

It is encouraging that a commencement has already been made by two of our warm-hearted brethren, on the western coast of this great continent; that promising openings appear to invite them forward; and that there are in Jamaica many of the sons of Africa not only pouring out ardent prayers for its salvation, but ready themselves, at any risk, to embark in this holy enterprise. "The Lord has done great things for us," in the west.

There is one more view which we might take, but on which we must not enlarge; and yet it is in no

small degree interesting ; and that is *the influence of our labours abroad on the state of our churches at home.*

As the Baptist Missionary Society had its origin in a deep and revived feeling of piety, it has tended to produce and extend the same. For years previously to its formation, the intercourse of the ministers and members of the associated churches, at their annual meetings, was marked by increasing spiritual-mindedness, and a deep concern for the possession and increase of vital godliness. For some years before the memorable meeting at Kettering, a prayer-meeting for the spread of the gospel, to be held on the first Monday in every month, was established throughout the association,—an example which has since been followed in every part of the world where evangelical Christianity exists. And so generally have missionary zeal and fervent piety been associated, that either of them in any Christian community may be, in most cases, assumed as the standard and measure of the other. Our mission has been the means of calling forth a generosity and a liberality far exceeding any thing which was previously known among us. And what may appear strange, is, however, the fact, that the more we have sent abroad for foreign purposes, the more we have raised at home for local and other objects. Our home missionary labours have kept pace with our efforts abroad. Our mission has indeed had a most blessed reaction on all our home institutions. We have multiplied our preaching stations, our churches, our places of worship, our schools, our colleges, in nearly the same ratio in which we have increased our missionary efforts.

And it is not too much to say, that our mission has

done much towards giving the doctrinal sentiments of our churches, generally, a more scriptural cast. Nor is this to be wondered at ; for, besides the writings of some who took the lead in establishing our mission, among whom was the venerated Fuller, that right state of feeling which a deep interest in the conversion of our fellow-creatures supposes, is highly favourable to right views and sentiments, and its influence has been most beneficially apparent.

And what is not the least important result, this mission has brought our whole denomination more closely together ; it has been a means and bond of union. It has presented before us a great object which has enlarged our minds, and warmed our hearts ; and the fervent and expansive charities which it has produced have proved highly favourable to an extended brotherly affection. It has made us better acquainted with each other, and promoted an intercourse between our ministers and churches throughout the kingdom, which was greatly needed. It has had a happy influence in correcting, in some degree, that extreme jealousy of any interference with the independent action of each little community, which made us, more than any other part of the Christian world, a rope of sand. It has given more compactness to our body, more unity to our movements. It has thus rendered us more competent, by a concentration of our strength, to meet any great emergency which may arise. It has furnished an exemplification of the scripture maxim, "The liberal soul shall be made fat ; and he that watereth shall be watered also himself." We have been blessed in blessing ; and on a review of the last fifty years, in especial connexion

with our mission, and its results, we now say, "The Lord hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad."

Let us now notice, in the second place, THE ACKNOWLEDGMENT WHICH ACCOMPANIES THIS REVIEW. "Great things" have been done for us. But let the glory be given where it is justly due. It is "THE LORD" who hath done these "great things for us, whereof we are glad."

That all events are under the guiding hand of Divine Providence, is a doctrine ever maintained in the sacred scriptures, and constantly recognized by the inspired writers. The great Ruler of the universe "worketh all things after the counsel of his own will," and controls and directs all the complicated movements of human affairs, to the accomplishment of his own purposes, and the promotion of his own glory. The concerns of empires and of individuals, the interests of his church, together with all its plans and efforts for extending the kingdom of his Son, are ever under his superintendence.

But there are some occasions on which the hand of God becomes more especially apparent, and our minds are strongly impressed with the wisdom and the goodness which guide human affairs. Every individual Christian must have seen much of this in his own experience, in the prayers which have been answered, the blessings which he has so opportunely received, and the deliverances which have been effected for him, in seasons of perplexity and danger. "I will bring the blind by a way that they know not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known; I will make darkness light before them, and crooked

things straight; these things will I do unto them, and not forsake them." And in the records of the church how many striking exemplifications of this we have. The release of the Jews from Babylon was at a time and in a way so little expected, and in circumstances so extraordinary, that the very heathen could not help acknowledging that their God had done great things for them; to which they gratefully responded, and said, "The Lord hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad." And we think that it is impossible for a devout mind to contemplate the origin of our mission, the manner in which it has proceeded, the many providential interpositions in its favour, and what it has been the means of accomplishing, without seeing, in a very marked and evident manner, the guiding hand of God. Allow me in a few instances to exemplify this.

And, first, *with reference to the manner in which our mission arose.* When the Supreme Being accomplishes any thing especially great and beneficial for man, it is generally in such a way as to illustrate that important maxim, "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord." He commonly on such occasions works by such instruments, and in such a way, as men would not have devised or selected; so that there is no room for human wisdom to glory in its sagacity, or for human power to glory in its strength. Men generally commence great projects with much parade and magnificence; and mighty preparations have often ended in small results. But it seems God's way, from "the day of small things" to produce "great things." "God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and

God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; that no flesh should glory in his presence." When the wild project was entertained of rescuing the Holy Land from the infidels, how loud a note of preparation was sounded; all Europe re-echoed with it; and the enterprise commenced on a scale of grandeur scarcely ever equalled. Whole nations poured out their multitudes, the chivalry of all Christendom rallied round the crusading banner, and "the kings of the earth" brought to it all their honour and their glory. But it was of man; and it came to nought. When God introduced the kingdom of his Son, that kingdom which was finally to become universal, and to fill the whole earth with the divine glory, it came "not with observation," no pomp of circumstance marked its advent or its progress. It was "a small stone cut out of the mountain without hands," though it was to become "a great mountain, and to fill the whole earth." Such was the rise of all those great institutions which are now working so efficiently in disseminating divine truth; among which we may mention the establishment of Sunday-schools, which are now spreading themselves over the land, the Religious Tract Society, sending its silent messengers of mercy through the world by millions, and the British and Foreign Bible Society, whose magnificent object it is to furnish "all nations, and languages, and people," with the sacred scriptures. Each of which was at first like the cloud which the servant of the prophet saw, "no bigger than a man's hand."

And this was precisely the way in which our mission commenced. It was neither at a time, nor in

such a place, nor by such means as the wisdom of this world would have selected. It was at a period when all Europe was in commotion,—when the breaking out of the French revolution affected the peace of every country, and the stability of every throne,—when the all-engrossing topic was politics, and when party spirit was high and violent. In so dark and stormy a sky who would have expected the rising of such a star? Amidst such elements of confusion and discord, who would have looked for the advent of so celestial and pacific a visitant? Yet it was just at that time, that a few hearts, warm with the benevolence of the gospel, were found panting for the more general diffusion of its blessings, longing for the salvation of the heathen world, and devising and carrying into effect, with an enlargedness of heart which some even of their own brethren could not understand, plans for the conversion of idolaters to the knowledge and the worship of the living God. Divine providence was about to make a new movement in the church, the set time was approaching when the vast continent of India was to receive the word of eternal life in its many languages and dialects; but who would have selected our denomination as one of its chosen instruments to take the lead in this great work?—a denomination so characteristically jealous of any thing like human authority in matters of religion, that not a few of our churches at that time looked on our single academical institution with suspicion, fearfully apprehensive lest human learning should be substituted for the teachings of the Divine Spirit. And if any one had imagined that such a movement was about to take place, where would he

expect that it would commence? He might have fixed on one of our seats of learning, with its ample endowments, and its literary distinction, as most likely to originate such a project; or, he might have thought of some emporium of commerce as favourable to intercourse with foreign nations; or, he might have supposed that the metropolis, so rich in its resources of every kind, would be a most suitable locality for the commencement of so great an enterprise;—he might have said, as each of the populous and wealthy cities of the British realms occurred to his mind, as Samuel, when the sons of Jesse passed in review in his presence, “Surely the Lord’s anointed is before him.” But the origin of the mightiest rivers is often found in some sequestered spot. And KETTERING has the honour of being the birth-place of this Society: and whatever political or commercial changes may pass over this town, it will descend to posterity associated with all that is great and holy in our missionary enterprise. “My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord.”

The hand of Providence seems also especially marked *in the direction which has been given to our missionary operations*. When it was determined, with a firmness of faith which “in hope, believed against hope,” to attempt something on behalf of the heathen world, it was for some time a matter of serious deliberation, on what part of the territory of the prince of darkness the attack should first be made. The originators of the mission, situated in inland towns, had no foreign connexions, no apparent means of determining, amidst so great a destitution of the means of grace,

what part was the most destitute,—among so many obstacles, on every hand, to their proceedings, in what direction the fewest would be found. Few, perhaps, would have thought on India for this purpose, considering its great distance, the difficulty of intercourse with it which then existed, its many languages, and the disinclination of the British, or Indian government, to permit such attempts to be made. But there were two series of events, proceeding at the same time under the direction of Divine Providence in converging lines. It was in 1784 that “it was resolved to set apart an hour on the first Monday evening in every month, for extraordinary prayer for the revival of religion, and for the extension of Christ’s kingdom in this world.” This was about the time that Mr. Thomas was returning from his first voyage to India as a medical officer, deeply affected with what he had heard and seen in that region of idolatry. Mr. Thomas was induced to take another voyage; he staid in Bengal learning the language, preaching to the people, and attempting the rudiments of a translation of the scripture; while the churches at home were continuing “with one accord in prayer and supplication.” In 1792, the Society was formed, and while its founders were inquiring to what part of the heathen world their efforts should be directed, Thomas was in London soliciting aid in order to establish a mission in India, and anxiously inquiring for a coadjutor to accompany him. At Kettering Providence brought both these remarkable men together, and Bengal was at once fixed on as the scene of their future labours. Many difficulties might have been started, and many objections made, but the

issue has proved that "the thing proceeded from the Lord."

It was with very slender expectations that our first missionary and his wife set sail for Jamaica; but the voice of Providence was heard in those accents of entreaty which were borne across the Atlantic, "Come over and help us," and the results, far exceeding what the most sanguine could have expected, have proved that this was "the Lord's doing," and we may justly add, "It is marvellous in our eyes."

The instruments which Providence has raised up to commence and carry on this great work seem distinctly to call for an acknowledgment of the hand of God. In all the works of God, so far as they come under our observation, in nature and in grace, there is an evident adaptation of means to their ends, and of agencies to the work which they are designed to accomplish; and we see this feature of the divine proceedings in a very marked and impressive manner in the first founders of our mission, and those who have since taken a prominent part in its concerns.

Shall we not perceive this, if we notice individually the characters of those who were first united in this holy work? It was in the bosom of Carey, born in an obscure village, and of lowly parents, that the germ of this Society sprung up. And were there not qualities developed in his growing youth which marked him out, in the view of all intelligent persons acquainted with him, as destined by Providence for some great work? Gifted with an inextinguishable thirst for knowledge, and a steady application in acquiring it—with a tenacity of purpose which never relaxed till its object was accomplished, and with a

special aptitude for acquiring languages, he obtained, by his own unaided efforts, and while supporting a family by his own industry, more than many acquire with the leisure of a life. And when his mind was brought under the sanctifying influence of divine grace, he possessed, and that in a high degree, precisely those elements of character, that combination of physical, intellectual, and moral qualifications, which the great work to be accomplished specially required. And in bringing forward the claims of the mission at home, and introducing it to our churches, in gathering to it friends and support, there were the fervent piety, the learning, the rising respectability and influence of Ryland, and the almost seraphic love and zeal of Pearce; and the prudent counsels of Sutcliffe, the Nestor of the little band; and the giant power of Fuller, as active as he was mighty, who went through the slumbering ranks of our British Israel, arousing their energies, chiding their supineness, and with thrilling effect pronouncing the curse of Meroz on all who should not come "to the help of the Lord against the mighty." These were the men, and others their coadjutors, who, with just the qualifications of mind and character which such a crisis required, gave, under God's blessing, so favourable a commencement to our missionary enterprise.

If we look at our mission in a subsequent stage, after the first difficulties had been surmounted, and it was seated at Serampore, we are again forcibly impressed with the adaptation of the instruments to their work. For between twenty and thirty years were associated together in that hallowed spot Carey, Marshman, and Ward; names honourable to the denomi-

nation to which they belonged, dear to the whole Christian church, and destined to live in the fragrant recollections of distant ages as long as devoted piety and missionary zeal are revered amongst men. Here were three men, of dispositions, and characters, and talents very diverse, and not without their respective imperfections, but all glowing with intense ardour for the glory of God and the salvation of men, full of faith and zeal, making efforts which astonished both the church and the world, and devoting, with a sublime generosity seldom equalled, and perhaps never surpassed, thousands, yes, tens of thousands, the produce of their own labours and talents, to the missionary cause. These were men adapted to each other, and, perhaps we may say, necessary to each other, who continued in unbroken friendship till, one after another, they entered into their rest; and who, by the blessing of God on their joint labours, accomplished a work which will remain a monument of their devoted piety and zeal more lasting than our empire in India, or than the great globe itself. These men "stood in the front of the battle of India missions, and during the arduous struggle which terminated with the charter of 1813, in granting missionaries free access to India, they never for a moment deserted their post, or despaired of success. When, at a subsequent period, Lord Hastings, who honoured them with his kind support, had occasion to revert in conversation to the severe conflict they had passed through, he assured them that, in his opinion, the freedom of resort to India which missionaries then enjoyed was owing, under God, to the prudence, the zeal, and the wisdom which they had manifested, when the whole weight of

government in England and in India was directed to the extinction of the missionary enterprise.* Must we not acknowledge the hand of God in this remarkable adaptation of men to their work?

And if we advert to our beloved brethren who, in Calcutta and other parts of India, have been more recently carrying forward the objects of the mission with a most exemplary and persevering devotion, we see again the same eminent fitness for their work. In the metropolis of British India, William Pearce, imbued with much of the spirit of his father, after more than twenty years' incessant activity and effective labour, died at his post, leaving his name identified with the establishment of the mission press in that city. And there we see a Yates raised up, catching the falling mantle of the departed Carey, and availing himself of all the advantages which his great predecessor had created, carrying forward the translations of God's word to a point of accuracy and perfection that leaves scarcely any thing to be desired; who with his devoted coadjutors appear as adapted to their peculiar work in Calcutta, as the Serampore brethren were to theirs.

And can we look to the west without being strongly impressed with the suitability of the agents employed to the work they have had to accomplish? Every one seems to be in his right place. A wisdom more than human has superintended the whole. It was not the sagacity of our committees which, out of a multitude of candidates, selected such men as Coultart, and Philippo, and Burchell, and Knibb, and others, whose

* Friend of India, Dec. 14, 1827.

names will readily occur to the mind. Those who at home guided the affairs of the mission had no conception of the greatness of the work which lay before them; and, had they foreseen it, they would in all probability have shrunk from it. But they, and the men whom they sent, were led on by Divine Providence "in a way that they knew not." And when a young man of Kettering, whose only recommendations appeared to be decided piety and an earnest desire for usefulness, presented himself as a candidate for missionary work, who could have thought that this was the stripling who, in the great contest between slavery and Christianity, should take his stand in the front of the battle, boldly snatch up the gauntlet which the blaspheming Philistine had thrown down in defiance of the armies of the living God, and, grappling in mortal conflict with this giant power, should be seen planting his foot on his neck, dashing his broken fetters to the ground, and exclaiming, "The Negro is free!" Would the Professor of Sanscrit and Bengali have found his appropriate sphere in the West Indies, or the apostle of Jamaica freedom have been in his congenial element among the biblical translations of Serampore? Could a Yates have changed places to advantage with our Tinsons or our Clarkes? It was on this peculiar adaptation of our several agents to their stations and their work that every thing, under God, depended. If other dispositions had been made, the state of our mission in both hemispheres would have been greatly different. And yet it was no foresight of ours that made these admirably fitting arrangements: an invisible hand guided the whole.

It is "the Lord" who "hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad."

In a word, if we view the rise and the progress of our mission up to the present time, it seems to have been almost one constant scene of providential interposition. If we seriously contemplate the first formation of the Society, the places to which its movements have been directed, the remarkable train of providences, from the first embarkation of Thomas and Carey, to the settling of the latter with his new associates at Serampore, under the sheltering wing of the Danish government—the prolongation of the invaluable lives of the elder missionaries till so great a work had been accomplished, while so many of their brethren fell a sacrifice to the climate,—the subsequent transference of the seat of our Indian mission to the capital of Bengal—a succession of missionaries so adapted for their work both in the east and in the west—the many imminent perils to which our missions have been exposed in both hemispheres, from persecution, from fires, from the failure of pecuniary resources, from the death of valuable men, from the destruction of our places of worship, from the charges of one kind or another that have been made against our movements or our agents, both at home and abroad, in the senate, at the council table, and before the public—and if we consider how, notwithstanding all, our mission has been preserved, has been extended, has been blessed to a degree on which we scarcely could have calculated had none of these difficulties existed—it would indeed be insensibility, it would be ingratitude, it would be impiety, not to acknowledge the hand of God. We do therefore

now, at the close of half a century, with hearts I trust solemnly and suitably affected, in the face of heaven and earth, say, "The Lord hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad."

It only remains that we add a few words ON THE SENTIMENT HERE EXPRESSED. And on account of the length to which this discourse has already extended, and the expectations which we have from the services of to-morrow, I shall be very brief.

The sentiment here expressed is *one becoming the occasion*. It is that of gladness. There is a "time to weep, and a time to rejoice." There are seasons when the appropriate feeling is that of humble submission to the inscrutable dispensations of Him who is "a God that hideth himself;" and there are seasons when the manifestations of his mercy and goodness invite us to joyful praise. And surely this fiftieth year of our mission, the review of which presents us with the "great things which God hath done for us," deserves to be considered as a jubilee of holy joy and gladness. There is much in the present aspect of political and commercial affairs to excite in the children of this world serious apprehension and gloomy forebodings. But let us, who are the subjects of "a kingdom which cannot be moved," view with sacred pleasure the advances which this spiritual kingdom has made in the world within the last half century, and the part which we have been permitted by a gracious God to take in so glorious a work.

Let us rejoice, then, in the many conversions of the Hindoo, the Mussulman, and the negro,—converts to the faith of Christ, whom we shall never behold on

earth, but whom we hope to meet among that "great multitude which no man can number, out of all nations, and people, and tongues, and kindred," who shall surround "the throne of God and of the Lamb." Let us rejoice in the additional and delightful evidence that we have, that the gospel is still, what it ever has been,—"the power of God unto salvation," and that "the weapons of our holy warfare," which are not carnal, are still "mighty through God;" as mighty to the conversion of the heathen now, as they were in the first ages of Christianity. A great problem has been solved, by the modern experiment made by our missionaries in the regions of idolatry and the lands of slavery. The church of God now, as well as in apostolic times, possesses the means for the conversion of the world.

And let us be glad that our expenditure, our labours, and prayers, have not been in vain. The merchant rejoices in the success of his venture, the husbandman in that return of the fruits of the earth which compensates his toil and rewards his anxiety, and we should "be glad," that our fifty years of labour in this holy cause have not been unproductive. Nor because much is yet to be done, ought we to feel as though nothing has already been done. Look at the seed which has been sown in India, the churches which have been formed, the tracts and bibles distributed, the many translations of that divine word which never returns void;—is this nothing? Look at the island of Jamaica,—at the converts, the churches, the schools, the missionary zeal, in that land of freedom;—is this nothing? Look at the opening prospects in consequence of past exertions; "are not the fields already

ripe for harvest?" In gladness of heart, let us "thank God and take courage."

But let our joy be tempered and guided in its expression, by the peculiar circumstances connected with this occasion of gladness. It is not our own arm that has brought salvation, nor our own wisdom that has guided us. If we have planted or watered, God has given the increase. Let the joy, then, be the gladness of a grateful heart, sending up its warmest aspirations to Him who "hath wrought all our works in us," and "hath done great things for us." "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory!"

Let our joy be chastened with humility. A humble dependence on God was as characteristic of the commencement of our mission, as steadfastness of faith and ardour of zeal. In this spirit its founders went forward, and God was with them. In the same spirit let us review the past. Theirs was humble hope, let ours be humble gratitude. Let there be no exultation of party, no denominational pride. A prevalent feeling of this kind would be a sure signal of future failure. "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted, and he that exalteth himself shall be abased." Have we ever, in our individual experience, felt any undue exultation which was not followed by something mortifying? And I think it will be apparent in the history of this society, that if ever there has been exhibited a strong tendency to glory, either in our men or our measures, some severe check has been received. "Them that honour me, saith the Lord, I will honour;" and we cannot honour him aright, without "giving unto him the glory due unto his name."

And lastly, let our joy have its practical expression appropriate to the occasion. Let it not be a barren, unproductive joy; but a gladness of heart which shall subserve the interests of that sacred cause in which we have embarked. Let it give a new impulse to our future efforts, that, under God's blessing, the next fifty years may bear a ratio of progress and extension in our mission equal, at least, to that of the last half century. And should this be the case, (and why should it not?) what a review will be taken at the centenary of our mission! What triumphs of the cross will then be recorded; what an harvest will have been reaped in India from the seed which has already been sown; what a change will have been wrought in Africa, on whose behalf incipient efforts are now made; and to what an extent may the evangelization of China have proceeded; how much nearer will the church evidently be to its millennial glory, and the world to its complete renovation. But few, very few of us now present may expect to see this time on earth. Long before the arrival of 1892 the work of most of us will be done; but when we are with Carey, and Ryland, and Fuller, and all the noble band of departed missionaries of every branch of the Christian church in the kingdom of our Father, will not the joy of that second jubilee reach us, and be as superior to the gladness which now delights us, as heaven itself is to earth?

Let this year, then, be a season of grateful offerings, commemorative of the great things which God has done for us; and let the extent of our offerings prove the warmth of our gratitude. Let there not be an individual throughout the whole of our churches and

congregations who will not this year contribute something to the jubilee fund. The objects proposed to be accomplished by it have already been brought before the public. They are all, not only important, but intimately connected with the great purposes of our mission. The free-will offerings of this season, with the zeal and activity which they will call forth, will, we trust, remove many obstacles out of the way of our missionary efforts, give to its operations a new and vigorous impulse, and enlarge the sphere of its labours, especially on the continent of Africa. And let it be our answer to any inquiries why new efforts are to be made, why a large, a generous, and a voluntary offering is this year to be presented to the sacred cause; "The Lord hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad."

THE PRESENT POSITION OF THE MISSIONARY ENTERPRISE
CONTRASTED WITH ITS COMMENCEMENT.

A SERMON

PREACHED AT KETTERING, ON WEDNESDAY MORNING, JUNE 1, 1842.

BY THE

REV. EDWARD STEANE.

A S E R M O N.

ISAIAH XL. 31.

They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength.

It is the part of wisdom to converse with the past ; and scarcely less culpable is it than foolish to suffer the times in which we live to pass away without an attempt to rescue from oblivion the events and transactions by which they are marked. The divisions of time, the result, as they are, not of human but of divine arrangement, seem as though they were especially intended to aid us in our efforts. Devout men in every age, and the great instructors of mankind, have availed themselves of the periodical recurrence of remarkable epochs to review the course of providence, and to gather up and enforce the principles they have developed of the divine government, or the lessons they have taught of human duty.

The two faculties by which man as an intellectual creature is chiefly distinguished, are those by which he can identify himself at once with the past and the future. Memory enables him to retrace the steps of his earliest years, and, aided by history, he mingles with remote generations, calls up before him the men and the manners of former times, and lives amidst occurrences which transpired ages ago ; while imagi-

nation bears him forward into futurity, carries his views and anxieties into scenes which he will never witness, and opens before him prospects bright as heaven and distant as eternity. He is thus capable of giving a kind of indefinite expansion to his being, of living through all time, and of deriving the elements of his character and his happiness not simply from the present, but almost equally both from what has been, and from what shall be.

When, from the arrival of some special period, the occasion unsought for is naturally presented of reviewing the history of former years, it would indicate a criminal indifference as well to our own obligations as to the course of divine providence, were we to turn away from an employment to which, as by the voice of God, we are so manifestly called. To me, therefore, it appears that the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the formation of our Missionary Society, with becoming services of religious joy, is so far from needing an apology, as some have deemed, that we should have shown ourselves insensible to the claims of piety and duty had we not observed it. The rise of the Baptist Mission, succeeded as it was by many similar institutions, whose conjoint influence has impressed a character on the age in which we live, marks a new era in the history of the Christian Church; and the benevolent triumphs it has, under God, achieved in both hemispheres, during the first fifty years of its progress, while they may justly challenge the observation of philanthropists, philosophers, and statesmen, and exhibit to them results which none of their schemes for the moral improvement of mankind could have effectuated, especially invite the devout consideration

of the Christian, and fill his mind with emotions at once of gratitude and hope.

The review of the fifty years which are now closing upon our Society should, I conceive, be rendered subservient principally to two purposes; to excite, in the first instance, sentiments of admiration and devout thankfulness, and then to stimulate to renewed and augmented exertion. My province lies with the latter.

In the discourse to which many of us were privileged to listen last evening, the review itself was sketched with a rapid, but felicitous pencil. The chief operations of the mission were described, and the power of divine grace was exemplified in the difficulties surmounted, the interpositions of mercy realized, and the good effected; and the thankful joy of every heart was elicited, while the preacher's glowing illustrations of his text made us ready with united voices to exclaim, "The Lord hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad."

Suffer me now, fathers and brethren, to lead you into another train of thought; not less in harmony, I trust, with this great occasion, though falling, as I am painfully conscious it must, far short of its requirements.

Though it may be true that the achievements of the last half century surpass what even the most sanguine could have ventured to expect, and perhaps bring the modern successes of Christianity into parallel with its primitive triumphs, it must yet be felt that the church has an incomparably greater work to do than any she has hitherto accomplished. It were to make, therefore, but an ill use of the present season, if we did not

seize upon it as affording the opportunity and the material for holy provocation to renewed effort. If we cast our eyes upon the past, it must not be with a look of complacency that would enervate our zeal, and lull our spirits into inglorious repose, but rather that we may gather new incentives to our hallowed toil. And if the knowledge we have acquired has served to enlarge our conception of the magnitude of the undertaking, and the difficulties that surround it, and to overwhelm us with a sense of our utter incompetency to it, let me remind you of the source from which all necessary aid can be derived, as exhibited in the gracious promise before us, "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength." I will not say that our strength is exhausted by the labour of fifty years, for, on the contrary, I believe our denomination was never in a condition more vigorously to prosecute the work of God than it is at the present time, its growth and internal prosperity having advanced at an equal, if not an augmented ratio, with its efforts to extend the limits of the Christian faith; but it becomes us habitually to bear in mind, that the capacity to labour and the blessing which must crown our labours with success, come alike from God.

In prosecution of the design I have in view, I shall endeavour in the first part of this discourse to ascertain our present position in regard to missionary work, and our capacities for it, especially as contrasted with the state of things when the Mission was founded; then to point out and illustrate some of the necessary conditions of success; and finally, to exhibit a few of

the special encouragements to the continued pursuit of the great enterprise which our own times supply.

I.

There are many points of view in which our position in relation to the great work of subduing the heathen to the dominion of the Son of God, and our capacities for engaging in it, contrast most favourably with those of our predecessors.

1. Amongst these I may mention, first, *that the principles on which the work proceeds are both more clearly understood and more extensively admitted amongst our churches, and by Christians at large, than they were fifty years ago.* At that period, as is well known, doctrines widely prevailed which are altogether inconsistent with efforts to propagate the gospel, and which, wherever they still obtain, are invariably found to paralyse them. The views which were held on the nature and extent of divine requirements and human ability, on the design of the atonement, and the manner in which it should be announced to the world, on the necessary connexion between the agency of man and the accomplishment of the designs of God, and on kindred subjects, were, if not for the most part, yet to a great extent, inimical to any movement of a missionary kind. Nor was any moral obligation felt to be resting on the church to exert herself for the world's salvation. The binding nature of the unrepealed commission on Christians of every age, "Go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature," was

not understood. The Christians of that day seemed not to know that it possessed the authority of law, or they deemed that, however imperative it might once have been, it had long become obsolete. The founders of our mission had to clear the way at every step they took ; not simply to maintain the enterprise against the opposition of adversaries, but to vindicate its scriptural propriety to their friends. The church had been slumbering for ages ; and not only had her indolence acquired the force of an inveterate habit, but it had enfeebled her faculties. She was not only indisposed to exertion, but incapable of perceiving why exertion should be made. Nor was this the extent of the mischief. Some there were, and those not a few, who carried the matter so far as to denounce the very design of converting the heathen as an impious interference with the prerogative of Jehovah, a profane attempt to anticipate the divine decrees, and to control the times and the seasons which the Father reserves in his own power.

All such sentiments have now well nigh disappeared from our churches. Probably, since the days of the apostles, the principles which give rise to every kind of evangelical effort were never more clearly perceived, or more firmly grasped than now. The possession of the gospel is almost universally understood to imply the obligation to propagate the gospel. It is not simply admitted to be a good work, but it is felt to be a necessary work ; not merely that we may engage in it, but that we must. It is held to be a dereliction of duty, the violation of a sacred trust, of which that Christian is guilty who is content to be saved himself, and makes no effort to save others. Such professors

indeed, though a few perhaps may still remain, are now rarely to be found. If occasionally we meet with one, so unusual is the occurrence that we gaze upon him as a sort of moral curiosity, and talk with him of his obsolete opinions with something like the surprise we might be supposed to feel were we to converse with a man who had lived in the dark ages.

The prevalent theology is no longer of a kind to cramp the elastic spirit of Christian love, but rather to cherish its fires. With the expansion of the heart the understanding has expanded. Larger views are taken of the economy of redemption ; views every way more accordant with the personal dignity of the Redeemer, the infinite value of his sacrifice, and the satisfaction promised to recompense the travail of his soul. The minds of good men have outgrown the narrow conceptions once entertained of the genius and design of Christianity, and have taken hold of the magnificent idea, that, as all men stand equally in need of salvation, so, without distinction and without limit, salvation is to be proclaimed to all. No geographical boundary intercepts the effects of the fall ; none shall intercept the effects of the atonement. No rivers, no chains of mountains, no wide-spreading impassable desert, no gulfs, or seas, or oceans, have arrested the course of sin ; none shall arrest the triumphs of the cross. If the propitiation of Calvary have no adaptation to the case of the Hindoo or the African, how shall I ascertain that it will save my own countrymen ? If it be not sufficient for all, how shall I be certain that it is sufficient for myself ? Who perceives not that the cross is the common hope of man ? It casts its ample and refreshing shadow over every portion of the earth,

and places all its guilty millions within the reach of forgiving mercy.

These sentiments prevailing, ours is not the task to lay the grounds and make sure the foundations of the work. We have not to assail the strongholds of ancient prejudice in the bosom of the church, nor to satisfy the friends of God that there is no usurpation of an office which belongs not to them, in attempting to bring the heathen under the dominion of his Son. The activity which prevails in our own churches, and the growing interest they take in the mission, are indications of the wholesome doctrine by which they are nourished, and promise most auspiciously for its future progress. We have not to create the missionary spirit, but only to foster and direct it; not to kindle the spark, but to fan the flame.

Something may perhaps yet require to be done to guard ourselves against discouragement, in cases where, after long toil, comparatively few of the heathen are converted. And this, I think, is to be accomplished by a still more distinct apprehension of some of the principles which are involved in our work, and which some mind capable of encountering the subject, and of placing it in a satisfactory light, might more fully develop than at present I recollect to have seen them. The conversion of souls is infinitely desirable, but the desire of their conversion, as a motive for engaging in missions, should be controlled by other considerations of even superior importance. Though no soul had been converted by all our missionary labours, the sending the gospel to the heathen would still remain an imperative duty. Success is not the measure of obligation. It is a stimulus to action, but not the

God's words must be spoken to the nations, as anciently to the Jews, "whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear."*

There may also be a danger of overlooking another material point. Our views of the sufficiency of the atonement should never be dissociated from the sovereignty of divine grace. When the apostle James concluded the debate on the question of subjecting the converted gentiles to circumcision, he commenced his speech in these words:—"Men and brethren, hearken unto me. Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name." Now I conceive that, by modern missions, God is doing precisely the same thing as he did by the primitive efforts of the Christian church. He is visiting the gentiles, *to take out of them* a people. This was his purpose originally, and this I apprehend is his purpose still, whatever may be ours. This purpose, then, will assuredly be accomplished. Whether in any particular field of missionary labour God have much people, as at Corinth, or whether he have but few, the people whom he has he will gather. And should it not be enough for us to be the instruments of converting these, though the rest remain in unbelief?

Let me add yet a third consideration. The salvation of men is not the ultimate end of the economy of redemption. That economy, while it is the grand and only remedy for human guilt, is also an instrument for conducting God's moral government of the world; and the ends of that government will be secured by

* Ezek. ii. 7.

the publication of the gospel among the heathen, even where they are not saved. God's probation of mankind is not completed until they have been placed under the gospel. It is necessary to the experimental process by which he is trying them as moral agents, and to the vindication of his own rectitude in the day of final judgment. He is thus, by our agency in this particular, making provision for the manifestation of his glorious perfections, and especially for the everlasting triumph of his equity as the sovereign Lord and Ruler of the universe. Though one end, therefore, should not be obtained, which we design and aim at in sending the tidings of salvation to the heathen, another end, still more noble and important, and never lost sight of by God himself, is attained, and that is, the dignity and consistency of his government. And though we may not be able in the present world to appreciate fully the force of this argument, it is but to remember that this state of things will soon be over, when the administration of the mediatorial kingdom will merge in the universal government of God; for "then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all." "A vast and stable eternity" (to use the language of John Howe) "remains, wherein the whole celestial chorus shall entertain themselves with the grateful contemplation and applause of his deep counsels. Such things as now seem perplex and intricate to us, will appear most irreprehensibly fair and comely to angelical minds and our own, when we shall be vouchsafed a place amongst that happy community. What discovery God affords of his own glorious excellencies and perfections, is principally intended to

recommend him in that state wherein he and all his ways and works are to be beheld with everlasting and most complacental approbation." *

2. It is obvious, to remark next, *that a corresponding change of opinion in relation to Christian missions has taken place beyond the precincts of the church.*

As the Christians of the second and third centuries were compelled to write apologies in vindication of Christianity, so in the nineteenth century it was not less necessary to apologize for efforts to propagate it amongst the heathen: with this remarkable difference, however, between the two cases, that, while the Apologies of Justin Martyr and Tertullian were addressed to a heathen government, those of Fuller and Hall were intended to conciliate rulers professedly Christian. The difficulties that embarrassed the early movements of the Baptist Mission, arising from the jealousy of the government and the opposition of parties high in their confidence, are too well remembered to need that I should do more than generally refer to them. Nor is it forgotten how the wit, and genius, and literary talent of the time were marshalled against the incipient design. Mainly, no doubt, this opposition proceeded from the deep-rooted enmity of the human heart against God and the progress of his cause, and was led on by men of deistical principles; but it arose also in part, at least in some minds, from mistaken apprehensions and ill-founded fears that the effect of the introduction of Christianity into Bengal

* Reconcilableness of God's Prescience, &c. Works, vol. ii. p. 250.

would be prejudicial to the permanence of British dominion on the continent of India. How little did the men who thus reasoned, reason or think like Christians! But, from whatever cause it sprang, we may inquire what has become of it now. Where, at the present day, are the statesmen who would prohibit the missionary from setting his foot on any shore that owns allegiance to the British crown? Where are the writers who affect to treat his self-denying labours with contempt? Where are the wits and reviewers who turn them into ridicule, or the philosopher who denounces the man a visionary, and his scheme a romance? And where is that large portion of the public who sympathized in the profane banter, and gratified their impious merriment at the expense of methodism and missions? Scarcely any thing is more remarkable than the altered estimate which is now formed of the missionary enterprise, by almost every class of persons. Men enriched with the noblest intellectual endowments, and adorning the loftiest stations in the country, are found among its advocates; senators extol it in parliament; writers of the highest order pay it the homage of their profound respect. It has evoked from the lyre of poesy some of its sweetest melodies and sublimest odes. It moulds much of the current literature of the day, and tinctures more. It has even created a literature of its own. And in the meantime the popular feeling has turned almost entirely in its favour, so that now you shall hear it spoken of in terms of commendation in almost all circles into which you can go. The impression prevails that it is a work so essentially good, and so necessary to the happiness of mankind, that it were

impious to oppose it. In the time of its founders, designs and tendencies were imputed to it which had no existence but in the disturbed imagination of its opponents; men now judge of it by its fruits. The benign and humanizing influence it has exerted in the East Indies, the civilization, industry, and comfort it has spread through the islands of the great Pacific, and the triumph it has achieved over slavery in our colonies—to say nothing of its noblest results in the spiritual renovation of character, the planting of Christian churches, the diffusion of the Word of God, the overthrow of idolatry, and the salvation of thousands and tens of thousands of immortal men—have carried conviction to all minds, even the most reluctant, and established its public reputation on a sure basis. No longer treated with contempt, or ridicule, or even indifference, it attracts to itself the consideration of legislators, conciliates the protection of colonial governments, receives the applause of patriots and philanthropists, and commands the admiration of all.

3. A third contrast greatly in our favour is found in *the augmented means for carrying forward the work which are now placed in the hands of the church.*

Agents, implements, and pecuniary resources, are all included in the means necessary to the conduct of missions. In each of these particulars, how marvellous is the creation of fifty years! Carry back your view to the commencement of this period, and on the 13th of June, 1793, you see Carey setting his foot on board the Danish East Indiaman which conveyed him and his beloved associate, Thomas, to the shores of Bengal. Two missionaries were all that the churches

of Britain at that time could send forth on the errand of God's love to the heathen, and even they were denied a passage in a British ship. There were none taking their departure to the South Seas, none to the West Indies, none to Africa; nor did it then appear whether others would follow these devoted men to the chosen scene of their holy toils, or whether they should labour and die alone. But now missionaries are going forth to almost every land, and the two have multiplied to thousands.

When the primitive evangelists took their departure from Jerusalem, they were endowed with the capacity of speaking all languages. The chief facility required for preaching in foreign lands was thus supernaturally possessed by them, at the very commencement of their work. Under how great a disadvantage, in comparison, must our brethren have laboured! Diligent application and unwearied industry could alone enable them to surmount the obstacle which lay at the very threshold of their undertaking. So essentially different in their entire structure and idiom are the languages of the East from those of the western parts of the world, that a competent authority records it as his opinion, that any six of the principal languages of Europe might be learnt with as little labour as one of those of India.* It must ever, therefore, stand as an instance of extraordinary skill and prodigious learning, that, in less than four years from his arrival, Carey had translated the New Testament into Bengali, and that this first translation was so rapidly followed by others into the venerable Sanscrit, and the various

* Letters on India, by Rev. W. Buyers, Missionary at Benares, p. 24.

dialects and languages of British India. Coincidentally with the translation of the scriptures, he devoted his great abilities as a scholar to the preparation also of grammars and lexicons, and the literary apparatus necessary to the acquisition of these oriental tongues; and we can scarcely, I imagine, over-estimate the value of these initial labours, or the advantage resulting from them to subsequent missionaries.

The translation of the bible into his native language ranks deservedly as the noblest amongst all the noble achievements of the great reformer of Germany, and was the most efficient instrument in producing and giving a permanent existence to the reformation. In like manner, may we not consider Christianity as rooted in the soil of India, and the evangelization of its inhabitants destined to advance at an incomparably augmented ratio, now that in their own tongue wherein they were born they read the wonderful works of God?

If the founders of our Indian empire achieved a great exploit when they subdued the natives to the sway of the British crown, it must be remembered that they possessed every requisite for their undertaking. Not only were they brave men, but they were well armed; not only did their bosoms burn with martial valour, but they carried in their hands the implements of war. When our missionaries assailed that stronghold of Satan, men of dauntless courage they were, and clothed in armour for self-defence. They had buckled on the breastplate of righteousness, on their heads was the helmet of salvation, their left arm carried the shield of faith, and they were clad with zeal as with a military cloak; but

where was the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God? The chief weapon of their warfare was wanting; and how utterly powerless did they at times feel themselves without it! Writing to Fuller, under date of January, 1796, Thomas says, "I would give a million pounds sterling, if I had it, to see a Bengal bible." Under such circumstances no soldier of the cross can take the field in Bengal again. His equipments are now complete. He can "put on the whole armour of God." Were the translation of the bible the solitary result of the Baptist mission in the East, that result alone, I hesitate not to say, would amply justify its formation, and all the toil and money expended during the subsequent fifty years.

And let me yet detain you for another moment on this important point. Those who are conversant with the history of the translation of the scriptures into our own language, know how slow was the progress by which it advanced to its present state. If we suppose Wickliffe's to have been the first translation of the bible (and there is no proof of the existence of any thing more than versions of parts of it at an earlier date), then it took eight hundred years, reckoning from the introduction of Christianity into England by Augustine, to produce a translation of the whole bible, and two hundred more to bring it to its present state. Thus it was the labour of a thousand years to give to Britain the word of God. Let me now place beside this statement an extract from a letter bearing date Calcutta, January 17th of the present year, and addressed by Dr. Yates to Dr. Hoby. "I will touch" (he says) "on the work of the father of our mission. The object on which Carey's heart was set is advancing, and I hope

by the end of this year the whole bible will be completed in quarto size, with references and readings. This will have been done within fifty years, and I think I may say in as great a state of perfection as the English version was five hundred years"—he might have said, comparing it only with Wickliffe's, eight hundred years—"after the introduction of Christianity into our island. If then in regard to the scriptures in Bengali, a language spoken by about twenty-five millions of people, we have done as much in fifty years as was done by our forefathers in our native land in five hundred years" (or rather, as we have seen, in eight hundred), "have we not reason to rejoice? Yes, I do rejoice in the goodness of God in this particular, and I feel quite confident, how many soever may be the versions of the scriptures in the Bengali in future years, that ours will have a lasting influence upon them all."

In referring to the instruments fitted for carrying on the work, I might mention many other besides this first and most important of them all, which have been provided, under God, by the persevering and successful efforts of his servants; and which, ready as they are for instant use, place us in relation to missionary efforts in circumstances of unprecedented advantage. But I omit any further notice of them, that I may just glance at our position in regard to pecuniary resources.

In nothing, I conceive, did the little band of holy men who in this town resolved on the formation of our mission, display their simple dependence upon God more, than in the total absence they evinced of anxiety on the pecuniary part of the subject. But

for the entire conviction they must have felt that the work was God's, and that the necessary resources would be provided by him, the amount of their first subscription would inevitably have deterred them from taking another step. At the same time they could never have anticipated that, in the brief space of fifty years, so large an amount would be annually raised for missionary purposes as is now realized. The income of our own Society has gone on progressively increasing, and though our expenditure has commonly of late years outrun our receipts, we have never applied in vain to the liberality of our churches. I will not dwell on this part of the subject; but, before I leave it, I must express my strong and growing conviction, that, of all the fears entertained in relation to the missionary cause, the fear of the failure of pecuniary supplies is the most unworthy and the most groundless. While the spirit of the founders of our mission dwells in the bosom of its conductors, they will never be deterred from prosecuting the work entrusted to their hands from the apprehension that they may involve the Society in pecuniary embarrassment. Only let them go on as men of God, strengthening and extending the mission, and they will find a cordial sympathy in the hearts of the thousands of their brethren for whom they are acting, and be generously sustained by their willing co-operation and still increasing contributions.

4. I will mention but one advantage more which we possess over our predecessors, and that is found in *the experience acquired from fifty years' exertions.*

The missionary enterprise in their hands was comparatively an untried work. They were literally, in

Fuller's expressive figure, like men about to penetrate a mine which had never been explored before. They neither knew by what methods they might best explore it, nor if its produce would repay the expense and hazard they would certainly incur. Most men were ready to predict the failure of the whole design, and even those who did not look upon it as altogether chimerical, entertained little hope of its success. We have lived to see every fear disappointed, and every expectation more than realized. The explorers have returned, bringing with them many a precious gem, of incomparably greater worth than the gold of Ophir or the diamonds of Brazil, and giving promise of the acquisition of incalculable riches, if the mine be but wrought with perseverance and skill.

In the meantime much practical knowledge has been acquired. An enlarged acquaintance has been obtained with the necessities of the undertaking, with the several modes in which it may be best carried on, and with the kind of agency suited to its different departments. Both the directors at home, and the missionaries in their several spheres of labour, thus come to the work with some considerable degree of aptitude, the result of availing themselves of the recorded observations and experience of their precursors. In these respects, it may be said that "other men have laboured, and we have entered into their labours." The most difficult part of the work is already accomplished. In storming a fortress, the victory is half achieved when the first breach is made; in rearing an edifice, the main thing is done when the foundation is laid; and so, in producing that mighty revolution by which the moral condition of the heathen world is ultimately to

be changed, till it become instinct with the vital grace of the Spirit and refulgent with the beauties of holiness, the end may be considered certain when the first impulse has been effectively given. The insertion of the leaven secures the leavening of the whole mass.

These then, as it has occurred to me, are some of the points of view in which our position and capacities for missionary work may be advantageously contrasted with those of the men who commenced it. And if, in circumstances so dissimilar to our own, they, gathering on this hallowed spot, "solemnly agreed to act in society together for the purpose," and did so in the spirit of Carey's magnanimous principle—"Expect great things, and attempt great things," what ought not we to do? Here, while standing on the ashes of one of those holy men, and as if in the conscious presence of the glorified spirits of them all, we are ready, after their example, to devote ourselves afresh to this great service. We follow them to the altar of God, and lay our sacrifice where theirs was consumed; desiring nothing so much as that we may be counted worthy to tread in their footsteps, and, after a few more years of pleasurable toil in promoting the same cause, to unite with them in the everlasting anthem, "Unto him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

II.

If, then, having arrived at an epoch in our missionary history, we are now prepared to renew the conse-

cration of ourselves to this blessed work, indulge me still further with your attention, my honoured brethren and fathers, while I venture, with much diffidence, to offer a few suggestions on points which seem to me of essential moment to its prosperity, and to our own honour and comfort in conducting it. On this part of my subject also, while indicating some of the necessary conditions of success, I shall be materially aided by bearing in mind the sustaining and directing principles of our revered predecessors, and in advertising as occasion may serve to their example.

1. Allow me then to suggest *the necessity of our cultivating a cordial love for one another.*

Need I remind you how much of the charm of our mission is derived from the strong affection which bound together the hearts of its founders? They were men of diversified character and intellectual endowment, differing much from each other in the mental peculiarities by which they were severally distinguished: but they "loved one another with a pure heart fervently." Nor do I think it possible to attribute too much of the salutary influence they exerted upon the age in which they lived to this cause. Having its origin in love, the mission grew and flourished, for it was fostered by a band of brothers; and, if it is yet to flourish, it must live upon the same aliment. It must be fostered by a band of brothers still.

When Jehu was on his way to Samaria to overthrow the temple of Baal, "he lighted," says the inspired historian, "on Jehonadab the son of Rechab coming to meet him; and he saluted him, and said to him, Is thine heart right as my heart is with thy heart?"

And Jehonadab answered, It is. If it be, give me thine hand ; and he took him up to him into the chariot." I have nothing to do with the character of Jehu. He was a bad man and actuated by bad motives, but he was engaged in a good object, one which he had undertaken by immediate direction from God, and he knew the value of a good man's friendship and co-operation. The union which he sought with Jehonadab is the union we must seek with one another—a union of heart and hand. Let us proceed in our work with united affections and united efforts, and we shall certainly rejoice together in its success.

I think I am not misled by a too partial judgment when I express my belief that there never was a period in which the tendencies to union, and the desire after it, were so great in our denomination as they are at present. It is true, there may not exist amongst us exactly such a combination of personal friends as that which is exhibited in the instance of those five men—Fuller, Sutcliffe, Ryland, Carey, and Pearce. Where, indeed, shall we find its parallel at all, except, perhaps, amongst the reformers, or in the times of the primitive church? But there is a much more general agreement drawing our pastors and churches together. If brotherly affection be less intense, it is more extensively exercised. Such spectacles as we are accustomed to see, when brethren from all parts of the kingdom convene in our annual assemblies, were unknown in the earlier stages of the mission ; and where, in the whole compass of ecclesiastical history, shall we find a parallel to the present assembly? That there should be diversities of judgment amongst us, is but the necessary consequence of using each for himself his own liberty of independent thinking ; but, whatever diver-

sity there may be, there is no discord, and even the diversities themselves are diminishing, both in number and importance. This, indeed, is the natural effect of love. The more closely good men unite with each other, the less do their differences become, melting away under the genial warmth of mutual affection ; and it will be hard to show that the conclusions at which we arrive are the less sound, or likely to be the less stable, because the understanding has been reached through the heart.

If union be a necessary element of success in our work, that work itself strengthens the bond which unites us. There was, unquestionably, this reflex operation strongly exerted in the case of the originators of the mission. If they loved one another before, their mutual attachment was greatly strengthened by their becoming "workers together for God." Besides supplying an object of common and deep interest in which their sympathies were equally engaged, there is something in the very nature of the service of Christ adapted to engender a sincere and ardent affection amongst those who are engaged in it ; and especially when it exposes them to hazard, involves them in difficulties, or calls for sacrifices and self-denying toils. Who, in reading the first chapter in the book of Revelation, has not paused to admire the inimitable pathos of the passage in which the author describes himself? "I John, who also am your brother and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ." O brethren! if our hearts be but surrendered to this hallowed influence, if holy love bind us together, and our companionship be cemented by a common interest in the kingdom of our Lord and common toils to promote it, we shall not have

lived in vain. This will be to follow in the track of the sainted dead, to breathe their spirit, to emulate their example, to reap their successes, and finally to share in their everlasting reward.

It seems to me as though the time had well nigh come, in which the mission and its daughter institution—the Bible Translation Society—were to form a centre of attraction to the whole denomination. The events which have transpired within the last few years, however much in some points of view they are to be regretted, have certainly had the happy effect of drawing us more closely together. The number of churches which take an active interest in the support of these institutions is annually increasing, and the feeling spreads that we are henceforth to live in closer harmony with each other, and with every part of the great Baptist family throughout the world. Nor let it be alleged against us by our fellow Christians, that we are therefore growing more sectarian. More denominational, I believe, we are growing, and I confess I rejoice that we are; but we do not love the universal church the less because we love our own section of it the more. Preference resulting from a prayerful examination of the will of Christ, and a conscientious adherence to it when it is believed to be ascertained, is not to be denounced as bigotry, but to be honoured as a demonstration of Christian principle; nor can I understand what kind of attenuated, subtle, and impalpable affection that must be which loves the church as a whole, but has no predilection for any particular part. If we conceive that our denomination is, in the main, more scriptural than any other (and if we do not thus conceive of it, why do

we attach ourselves to it at all?), then, not only are we justified in upholding its interests, but it would be a culpable dereliction of duty, and even treachery to the truth, if we did not gather round it with warm hearts and manly resolution, and love it all the more for being misrepresented or forsaken.

The effect of this larger and closer combination cannot fail to be felt in our operations for propagating the gospel. Its influence will be to strengthen our purpose, to stimulate our zeal, to concentrate our forces, to inspire our confidence, and, with the divine blessing, to ensure success. Where men lie dispersed, without concert, order, or discipline, communication, is uncertain, counsel difficult, and success impossible; but, where they are acquainted with each others' principles, experienced in each others' talents, practised in their mutual habitudes and dispositions by joint efforts in business, and above all, united in the concord of a holy fellowship, and embarked together in a common interest, it is evident that they are prepared to act a public part with a steadiness, skill, and perseverance, which must in the end be triumphant.

2. With this love to one another, let me conjoin *a steadfast adherence to the truth*, as a second condition of success.

The office of the church, like that of the Son of God, is to bear witness to the truth. Truth of every kind is valuable, and Christians will rejoice in its diffusion; but it is not for the propagation of every kind of truth that they are to be especially concerned. Their province is defined by the commission under which they

act—"Go and preach the gospel to every creature." Whatever is included in making known the "glad tidings of great joy which shall be to all people," belongs to them, but nothing else. They must neither fall short of this, nor go beyond it. Were I to speak still more definitely in relation to ourselves, I should say that the propagation of the truth in our hands must take a twofold character. It involves the inculcation of that portion of truth in which we have a common agreement with our fellow Christians, and of that portion also by holding which we are distinguished from them.

Equally with every other section of the Christian church, we have it in charge from our divine Master to publish to the world "the common salvation." Our missionaries are sent forth to preach to the nations "the unsearchable riches of Christ." Hitherto they have discharged with fidelity the obligation which they voluntarily undertook, and God has graciously vouchsafed them ample encouragement. Any defection from the great fundamental doctrines of Christianity would instantly unnerve their arm and defeat their success. The conversion of the heathen is utterly hopeless by any other means than the preaching of the cross. Unless our beloved brethren continue to be "a sweet savour of Christ," they had better return. If they cannot say from the depths of their soul, "We are determined to know nothing amongst men save Jesus Christ and him crucified," they are not the persons to go upon this errand. Let them take the first missionaries for their model. Their sermons spoke of nothing but Christ. Every fact they stated had relation to him, every train of argument

they pursued ended in him, every persuasion they urged was to bring sinners to him. With an earnest and affectionate zeal they directed all men to his sacrificial death, as the exclusive medium of pardon, the only source of hope to a perishing world. Their whole being was absorbed in the grandeur of redemption, and the work of making it known. They could think of nothing, speak of nothing, glory in nothing, but the cross of Christ. And with this doctrine they subdued and christianized the world. While our churches at home hold fast by this cardinal truth, and our missionaries abroad, after apostolic example, go forth to the heathen as "the ambassadors of Christ," the issue hangs in no doubtful suspense. The struggle possibly may be protracted, but the event is certain.

But, with our views of truth and of the preaching of Christ there is yet another point connected, which neither integrity nor conviction of duty will allow us to suppress, or even to conceal. We recur to the commission; "Go ye therefore, teach all nations, *baptizing them.*" By the sentiments we entertain on this part of the Saviour's last injunction we are distinguished from all the rest of our fellow Christians, and are distinctively known both as a denomination and as a missionary society. There is no virtue in dissenting from the practice of our fellow Christians, and especially when that practice has the consentient voice of any large proportion of them in its favour, unless, in our innermost convictions, it be required by fidelity to Jesus Christ. Up to that point nothing shall separate us, with our own consent, from the entire body of the faithful: but beyond that point we dare not go. We dare not keep back what we believe to be a part of his

will. How could we expect his blessing upon what, in our case, would be a wilful suppression of the truth?

And should we even be more zealous in this instance than in the estimation of others might be deemed needful, this excess of zeal might surely be pardoned, were it recollected that to this portion of truth our denomination is the solitary witness. The exclusive right of believers to the ordinance of baptism, and the obligation resting on all believers to be baptized, are, in our deliberate judgment, doctrines of scripture, and doctrines of scripture, moreover, which if we do not maintain them will not be maintained at all. Did our zeal, therefore, as is alleged, carry us somewhat beyond the line of rigid propriety, an apology might be found for us in this important fact. But what prominence, after all, do we give to this ordinance? Where, in the order of preaching, do we place it? Our answer to these inquiries is this. We aim to take the apostles and primitive evangelists for our guides; and, following them, we never place it first, but certainly we always place it second. We say, "Repent, and be baptized;" and we tell our converts, that, when the people of Samaria "believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women." Whoever may attribute to baptism that great function of the Holy Spirit by which alone sinners are regenerated, we do not; and whoever, on the other hand, may treat it as a thing of little account, using liberties with it which they venture not to use with any thing else that bears the impress of a divine institute, neither do we do this. We

add nothing to it, we take nothing from it; we leave it in the same honourable position in which the wisdom of the Son of God placed it—the simple and dignified symbol of the believer's fellowship in the death and resurrection of his Lord.

If, for a few years past, attention has been awakening afresh to this subject, and we have been placed in a new position in relation to it, candour will require the acknowledgment from all parties, that it has not been of our seeking. No new course have we adopted; no ancient paths have we forsaken. We have simply pursued the tenor of our way, and quietly we would have pursued it, had we been permitted. As our fathers acted, so have we. Admiring their unswerving fidelity, unmoved alike by the solicitations of opponents and the persuasion of friends, we have aimed at similar constancy. And a singular honour we deem it, that the same divine Providence which has in so large a degree committed the translation of the scriptures in modern times to the hands of Baptists, raised up amongst them men, who, to all their literary qualifications for the great task, superadded that still rarer endowment which, while it seated them with the docility of little children before the majesty of God's word, inspired them with the unflinching integrity of martyrs when contending for its purity before their fellow men.

No attentive observer of the course of events can be ignorant of the revival in the present day of some of the worst errors of the papacy; and of these, perhaps, the most pernicious, and at the same time the most widely spread, is that connected with the ordinance from which we derive our distinctive name. Nor is

the propagation of these sentiments restricted to our native land: they are transplanted to the plains of India, and are already working their mischief there. My conviction, as I ponder these things—and what thoughtful man does not ponder them?—gathers strength every day, that the great conflict which is evidently coming on will turn, in a large measure, perhaps mainly, upon this ordinance. No theologian, and no denomination of Christians, is prepared to stand in the breach, whose principles are erroneous here. In the contest with the Anglican and the Romanist, the pædo-baptist dissenter is no match for his adversary. With distinguished ability he may contend against tradition and church authority; but the more ability he displays, the more hopeless does his own position become. His very success recoils upon himself. With irresistible force does his adversary assail him with his own weapons, and demand of him the unanswerable question;—Take away church authority and tradition, and where are sprinkling and infant baptism? If there be any accuracy in this view, then what responsibility rests upon us! Fidelity, it must be remembered, lies not so much in maintaining truths which all agree to uphold, as in adhering to those which are deserted or denied. This, then, is our solemn obligation—an obligation which, originally devolved upon us by conscience and the word of God, is enforced by the necessity of the times—an obligation which, if we trifle with it, violate it, or refuse to discharge it, will overwhelm us with merited confusion; but which, if we acknowledge and fulfil it, will mark us as men fearing God, and set for the defence of his truth.

3. If a stedfast adherence to the truth be essential to our success, so also is *an exclusive reliance on spiritual means for its propagation.*

I need scarcely remark, certainly it is unnecessary to take up any of your time in showing, that the gospel in its propagation repudiates any resort to craft and artifice, that it prohibits the use of violence and coercion, and refuses to lean on the authority and support of civil government. These truths are to us so elementary, and withal so self-evident, that they have acquired the force of maxims. And not only does the gospel altogether decline assistance from either of these quarters, but experience has shown that, whenever its friends have placed it in alliance with such auxiliaries, instead of promoting its advancement they have put its very existence in peril; just as, when Ahaz sought succour from the gods of Damascus, “they were the ruin of him and of all Israel.” Our wisdom then consists, as in the integrity of our purpose, so also in the simplicity of the means by which we seek to effect it.

But the means to the use of which we are thus restricted, are capable of assuming various forms: having a generic nature, they subdivide into many species. Hence the translation and diffusion of the word of God, the institution of schools of various kinds for the education of different classes of pupils, the composition and circulation of short religious treatises and tracts, or the translation of such works, familiar discourse in the ordinary intercourse of life, disputations in the markets, and, above all, preaching. There is no want of scope for the abilities of our evangelists. Every order of mind may find its congenial occupation in subserviency to the great design, and in

consistency with the one kind of instrumentality which alone must be employed.

Though, perhaps, from the want of that knowledge which only experience can supply, it may scarcely be prudent that I should express a strong opinion in favour of any one of these modes rather than of all the rest, yet I cannot refrain from saying, that to me the great desideratum in our eastern mission (and the remark will apply in some degree to all oriental missions), seems to be more of the direct preaching of the gospel. I am not unaware of the difficulties which hinder it, nor of the arguments by which a preference is sought to be maintained for educating the native youth, nor of the demands made upon the time and strength of a missionary in so many other ways, nor of numerous things besides which are alleged on the subject; but there is one answer to be given to them all, and that answer is found in the fact, that preaching is God's ordinance for the salvation of men. "It pleased God," says the apostle, "by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." We have no reason to suppose that there was any peculiar adaptation in this instrument fitting it for apostolic use which it does not possess now: it was in no degree more suited to convert the inhabitants of Corinth, than it is to convert the inhabitants of Calcutta, and it may at least be deemed worthy of inquiry whether its more extensive adoption might not give promise of more extensive success.

4. But I hasten to remark fourthly, that the efficiency of our missionary operations must greatly depend on *the selection of suitable agents to conduct them.*

When the gospel was to be preached in the first age to the gentiles, Saul of Tarsus was converted, and raised to the apostleship for the purpose. There were already twelve apostles; it was not, therefore, from a deficiency in the number of this order of agents that he was added to the rest; it must have been because he was seen by infinite wisdom to be in an extraordinary degree suited to the work. Special occasions and great enterprises call for an order of talent which is in harmony with them. It is not every statesman who is fitted to be an ambassador; it is not every minister who is qualified to be a missionary.

Nor is it only in the foreign department of the society's affairs that we need this adaptation of the agent to his work; it is equally required at home. If a nation is to be successful in war, not only must there be brave and skilful generals in the field, but sagacious and astute ministers in the cabinet. Some men are expert in action, some are wise in counsel; some men are enterprising and bold, some are prudent and acute; some have large understandings, and some burning hearts. The great work of conducting Christian missions requires and deserves the consecration of the noblest endowments with which human character has ever been enriched. The church of God must give up to it her best and ablest sons.

It must be reckoned amongst the felicities of our own mission that it has been so distinguished in this respect. It would be a criminal disregard of the hand of God not to acknowledge the eminent degrees of fitness for their office with which he endowed its founders, and not a few of those who, having been associated with them, or having succeeded them, have also

entered into their rest. It were superfluous to speak of the masculine and acute understanding of Fuller, the wisdom of Sutcliffe, the intrepidity and tenacious perseverance of Carey, the elevated piety of Ryland, or the seraphic love of Pearce. They were men in advance of the age in which they lived, and they have left the impression of their own characters upon it. It was indicative of a capacious grasp of intellect as well as of grandeur of moral sentiment, when, in reference to the communication of the gospel to the heathen, Carey enunciated his two simple, but ever memorable propositions. The mind that could originate such thoughts, and the minds that could sympathize with them, not as abstract speculations, but as principles of action to be incorporated with their very being, to give the direction and tone to the main business of their lives, must have been cast in no ordinary mould. Theirs was not the poetry of benevolence, but its practical and arduous toils. What they had the piety and intellectual vigour to conceive, they had the patience and determination to execute. The missionary zeal which now pours its thousands into the treasury of God was not then kindled; and I know not whether most to admire, the self-denial which led Carey to the shores of Bengal, or the indefatigable labours of Fuller, in which there was, perhaps, as much self-denial, to procure the necessary funds. Think of the man, who in his work on the absurdity of deism could produce such a chapter as that with which it closes—on “the consistency of redemption with the magnitude of creation”—toiling through London to solicit contributions from reluctant givers, and often retiring from the more public streets into the back

lanes, that he might not be seen by other passengers to weep for his having so little success.* Such men never die. It needs no spices to embalm, no monument to perpetuate their memory: their deeds live through all ages, and their very dust is fragrant as the morning's breath, and sweet as the flowers of spring.

Nor should I do justice to my own feelings on this occasion, or to my sense of his worth, were I to make no reference to that most estimable man, of whose services in the office of secretary the mission has been so recently deprived. Succeeding to the important post at a period when the last of its founders in this country was no longer able to sustain the burden, he continued to discharge its duties with singular ability, till a mysterious providence terminated together his labours and his life. If Dyer had not the majestic capacity of his great predecessor, he possessed the same incorruptible integrity, the same disinterested and untiring zeal. His intimate knowledge of our missionary affairs, his prudence, his diligence, his habits of business, and, above all, his unquestionable and ardent piety, eminently qualified him for his station, and have made it one of our greatest difficulties to supply his loss.

I dare not trust myself to speak of others, whether in the eastern hemisphere or the west, by whom the mission remains to be carried on. Not less obviously have they been raised up by God for their several spheres of usefulness; and they constitute a body of missionaries, than whom none can be more worthy of the confidence of the churches that have sent them out, or

* Ryland's Life of Fuller, p. 248.

more thoroughly devoted to their work. The learning and industry of Carey still survive in Yates; while his tender compassion for their wrongs, and his dauntless courage and manly eloquence in the vindication of their rights, will endear the name of Knibb to the African race for ever.

It belongs to the God of missions still to provide the agents by whom he will condescend to advance the kingdom of his Son, and it belongs to us to "pray the Lord of the harvest that he will thrust forth labourers into his harvest." But in this instance, as in every other, we must expect him to make known his will by the ordinary methods of his providence; and it behoves us to take such steps as are consonant alike with the dictates of piety and sound discretion.

The opinion entertained from the beginning is confirmed by all experience, that Europeans can do little more than introduce the gospel, and that its subsequent extension and general prevalence must be effected by a native ministry. No part of our proceedings, therefore, calls for more judicious management, and none is entitled to more steady and generous support, than that which contemplates the attainment of this kind of agency. If, under the superintendence of well qualified instructors, any considerable number of Hindoos and Africans, members of our missionary churches, can be trained to ministerial work, and then become native pastors and evangelists, the happiest results may be expected to follow; and not till the work shall mainly devolve upon such hands can we look for the rapid, still less for the universal diffusion of the gospel.

5. But all these conditions, important as unquestionably they are, and in a less or greater degree necessary to the efficient conduct of our work, must ever be fulfilled under *an habitual and deep conviction of our utter impotence and uselessness, except as the Holy Spirit shall crown our efforts with success.*

If we have nothing to do with God, he will have nothing to do with us; if we have little to do with God, he will have little to do with us: but, if we have much to do with him, if we are men of wrestling prayer and strong faith, if we "dwell in the secret place of the Most High, and abide under the shadow of the Almighty," we may expect to be indulged with his gracious approbation, and to be honoured as instruments in advancing his designs.

The missionary spirit is the offspring of prayer, of united, long-continued, and unwearied prayer. In the year 1784, the same association of Baptist ministers in which the missionary enterprise afterwards originated, agreed to set apart the evening of the first Monday in every month to pray for the revival of religion, and the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom throughout the world. Thus year after year did our forefathers meet and pray, till prayer both suggested effort and secured its success.

We have no means of procuring that great donation of the Holy Spirit which is the hope of the church for the world's conversion, but to ask for it in prayer. We can break up the fallow ground and cast in the precious seed—all the preparatory processes of the spiritual husbandry we can accomplish, but to every thing beyond this we are impotent. No blade will spring, no germ will quicken into life, till the showers de-

scend; but which of us can cover the face of the heavens with clouds, and cause them to empty their treasures upon the parched earth? Even Elijah could not do this. All that the prophet could do was to pray. And there our strength lies. Like him, we must go "up to the top of Carmel, and cast ourselves down upon the earth, and put our face between our knees:" with profound humiliation, and an entire concentration of mind in the earnestness of our desires, we must cry mightily to God for the blessing. And this, if we may take scripture examples as well for our encouragement as our guide, is the way to obtain it.

But such prayer, prayer so humble, so earnest, so soul-absorbing as the prophet's, can arise only from a deep sense of need. If we who are pastors, and our brethren who are missionaries, do not feel, and feel deeply, that in the great work of converting souls and building up the church we are absolutely nothing, and can do nothing of ourselves; and if you, dear brethren, who constitute our charge, and whom we "beseech for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with us in your prayers to God for us," if you have not a coincident feeling, I say not that we are not likely to be blessed—that is true—but we are not likely to pray for the blessing.

Let us then take occasion of this holy convocation to stir up each other to renewed prayer. A most salutary purpose will be effected if our Jubilee shall be signalized as the commencement of a new era in the devotions of our churches. Let the opportunity be seized to inquire if our missionary prayers have not become formal, if our faith be not decayed, if we have

not in a measure lost the sense of our dependence on God. In vain would the men who, fifty years ago, assembled on the spot where we now stand, have undertaken to commence the mission, if they had not fixed their eye steadily on God. The foundations were laid in prayer, and in prayer must the superstructure be reared; and then, at length, prayer shall be exchanged for jubilation and everlasting triumph, for "the head stone shall be brought forth with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace unto it."

And this is the time to pray. When missionary prayer was first offered, there were few encouragements to its exercise; every thing in the church was quiescent, almost to stagnation, and every thing beyond the church was sterility and drought. But now an attentive ear may catch the distant moanings and sighings of the wind, the stilly tremulous vibrations in the air, which betoken the coming showers. If there are indeed indications of the blessing, and signs of its approach, something like what the prophet heard while yet at the base of Carmel, "a sound of abundance of rain," then let every man of God lift up his hands in fervent supplication, for now emphatically is the time to pray. So the prophet thought, and betook himself to the summit of the mount; and in the meanwhile "the heaven was black with clouds and wind, and there was a great rain."

It is impossible to read with any degree of serious attention the prophetic portions of scripture which predict the latter day glory, without perceiving how closely they connect its arrival with the enlarged exercise of prayer. It is not, indeed, for us to say, that should God's people prove faithless to their duty, and

restrain prayer before him, he would prove faithless to his promise ; but, whatever he might be pleased to do in the exercise of sovereignty, we know what he has promised to do in answer to prayer. And the approximation of that auspicious period, I venture humbly to submit, is to be ascertained, not so much from arithmetical calculations and curious researches into the meaning of mysterious names and numbers, as by evidence of a moral kind. It will be foretokened by the prevalence of a spirit of humble and affectionate piety, and be ushered in amidst the prayers and importunities of the whole church. "Thou, O Lord, shalt arise and have mercy upon Zion, for the time to favour her, yea, the set time, is come : for thy servants take pleasure in her stones, and favour the dust thereof ; so the heathen shall fear the name of the Lord, and all the kings of the earth thy glory."

III.

It is more than time that I advanced to the concluding part of my subject : and, indeed, having engaged your attention so long, I shall be brief in what remains. There are, however, two or three considerations closely connected with the train of observation through which I have led you, eminently calculated to encourage our hearts in the work of God ; and in turning your thoughts to these I will finish.

It is a source of great encouragement, *that the history of the last fifty years demonstrates the adaptation of missionary agency to accomplish its object.*

In their commencement, Christian missions were

literally an enterprise, and that enterprise, for any thing that could be certainly known, might have proved a failure. The argument from the primitive propagation of Christianity, though strong, and in many points of view pertinent, was in others manifestly inapplicable. To say nothing of any other discrepancy between the two cases, the miraculous powers with which the first propagators of the gospel were endowed took them altogether out of the sphere of modern missionaries, and placed them in a position by themselves. Because the philosophers of Athens were convinced or silenced by the eloquence of Paul, it did not follow that the Brahmins of India would be subdued by the preaching of Carey. Because the worshippers of the great goddess Diana turned away from her shrine, and cast their books of curious arts into the fire, it was not to be inferred that the worshippers of Juggernaut would desert their god. Because the barbarous people of Melita received the shipwrecked apostle with no little kindness, it could not be concluded that the barbarians of Rarotonga would with equal friendship entertain the messengers of Christ. And though the predictions of the word of God justify the expectation, that eventually all nations shall be converted to the Christian faith, it did not follow that the time had come for their fulfilment, or that missions were the agency to fulfil them.

There was unquestionably, therefore, something of an adventurous spirit in the first attempt ; and, had that attempt failed, even Christians, for the most part, would scarcely have been surprised. But the enterprise is not a failure. In no sense has it failed ; but, on the contrary, its adaptation and efficiency are

proved beyond the most sanguine expectation of its friends. In no part of the heathen world that I remember to have read or heard of, have missionaries laboured in vain. Wherever the leaves of the tree of life have been carried, they have proved their medicinal efficacy for the healing of the nations.

There was a time when the modern theory of astronomy existed only in the sagacious conjectures of its great author; and, just as it must have been to Newton a source of indescribable satisfaction and encouragement, when by the processes of actual experiment and calculation he demonstrated the first proposition of his system, so, to the father of modern missions, the conversion of the first Hindoo must have been an event equally ominous of success.

This encouragement gathers force from every repetition of the exercise of converting grace. What then have we not witnessed since? The experiment has been subsequently made upon almost every modification and variety of the human race, and made uniformly with the same result. Amongst the converts to the gospel are to be classed men of almost every clime and country. In this manner it has been shown to be adapted to every part of the human family. The actual number of heathens converted since missions began it must be difficult to ascertain; but the calculation is, that at the present time there are not less than one hundred and eighty thousand in the fellowship of the various missionary churches; and to these must be added nearly as many more who have died in the faith.

These remarks on the result of missions generally apply with augmented intensity to our own mission. Not

in the spirit of boasting, but of devout and grateful acknowledgment of the mercy, it is stated that no mission has been favoured of God in an equal degree with our own. With pecuniary resources and a number of missionaries falling far short of some other kindred societies, its number of converts very far surpasses them.* The Lord of the harvest grant to them, and to all missions, to reap a thousand fold more than any of us have yet reaped! But, while from our hearts we give utterance to this prayer, we must feel that it is a debt of gratitude we owe him to be mindful of the blessing he has so graciously vouchsafed to our own efforts, and to use it as an incentive to redoubled zeal.

A second encouragement we may find *in the coincident increase of our churches at home*, which in the last fifty years have quadrupled their number: and a third, *in the circumstances which so auspiciously favour the recent and the proposed extension of our operations to Western Africa, and among the islands of the West Indies.*

The revived and extraordinary activity of antagonist principles and agencies, I am disposed to note as another source of encouragement. When "the devil comes down having great wrath," it is "because he knoweth that he hath but a short time." And so I think that, if there be at the present period a quickening of the long dormant activity of "the man of sin," "who sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God"—if the emissaries of antichrist are going forth into the pagan parts of the world, every

* See the statistical survey of the principal Missionary Societies, p. 184 of Dr. Harris's admirable Prize Essay, "The Great Commission."

where following in the track of protestant missions, with the sinister design of counteracting and subverting them—and if, in the bosom of what has hitherto been accustomed to be called by her admirers the purest of the reformed churches, there has sprung up a deadly heresy, which is preying on her vitals, and spreading its rank poison into every corner of the land—instead of regarding these circumstances with dismay, we should look upon them as amongst the signs of the coming on of the final struggle, when the empire of lies and imposture shall be overthrown, and grace and righteousness be triumphant for ever.

But I forbear all enlargement on these and other topics, and remark, finally, that *the aspect of divine providence* obviously portends the downfall of every pagan and antichristian power, and the universal diffusion of the gospel.

Indications neither few nor vague, but full of promise, open upon the Christian's eye, and furnish no doubtful premonition of the character of forthcoming times. The crisis is evidently approaching. That mighty revolution which shook the social system of Europe to its very foundations, and the rise of the Baptist Mission, were synchronical events; and no thoughtful man can reflect on the occurrences which have transpired in the subsequent half century, without perceiving that a change has been progressively taking place for the better in the political condition of the nations. At the same time, the brightening moral appearances which, in various parts of the earth, are breaking through the dark night of ancient superstitions, show that an invisible and benign agency is co-operating with more ostensible but subordi-

nate causes, and advancing towards their maturity the purposes of God. Amidst the convulsions of kingdoms the reign of Christ has been, and is still advancing. All events are manifestly taking one direction. The tide of providence has set in with a strong and steady current, and is bearing forward on its broad surface those scenes of universal joy which the harp of prophecy has long predicted, and for the arrival of which the whole creation groans. We seem to be standing on the verge of some magnificent disclosure. The church appears to be waiting for the next page of prophecy to be turned over, that its sublime contents may be evolved. What the result will be none can question, and the Christian need not fear.

Six thousand years of sorrow have well nigh
Fulfilled their tardy and disastrous course
Over a sinful world; and what remains
Of this tempestuous state of human things
Is merely as the working of a sea
Before a calm, that rocks itself to rest.

What then remains, but that the people of God, true to their principles and their hopes, should catch the inspiration, and pour their efforts, their contributions, and their prayers into the same channel? "For the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him."

