





OCCASIONAL PAPER.

Cambridge Mission to Delhi,

IN CONNEXION WITH THE S.P.G.

CHRIST THE GOAL

OF

INDIA.

BY THE

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*The Ramsden Sermon preached before the University
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“Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, Him declare I unto you.”

IN the very opening of the ministry of our Blessed Lord, in that first miracle which He did in Cana of Galilee when He manifested forth His glory and His disciples believed in Him, we have revealed to us an important and most valuable feature of all His future work, a principle of action which was for ever to underlie and characterise His dealings with and influence upon the world. He wished to supply the wine that was needed at that marriage feast. Under the same circumstances and endowed with the powers which He possessed one can scarcely doubt of what kind our own action would have been. There was, indeed, a store of water lying ready to His hand, but it was to all appearances utterly useless for the purpose which He had in view. Why then take any account of it? Why seem to suggest limitations of His power, why take off from the striking effect of so glorious an exercise of creative might by introducing that water as the material on which He would act? Why not by a sweep of His hand in the prerogative of His boundless power have simply produced out of nothing the wine for the feast? So He assuredly could have done, so I suspect should we have done, or at any rate the temptation to act so would have been very strong upon us. And yet by acting so He would have deprived this work of His of all, or almost all its value for us, and emptied it of some of its deepest moral significance and teaching. For surely one most essential feature of His act is just this, that He did not disdain or sweep aside the already existing material, however poor and weak and inadequate it might be, but rather He took it up and dignified and ennobled it, and carried it on to a before undreamt of perfection and worth and strength. Herein has always been seen to lie the deepest meaning—the most valuable moral lesson and revelation of this first work of His. So, too, in that other miracle, the feeding of the four thousand, we see exactly the same principle of continuity and perfecting observed. The seven loaves and the few small fishes—what were they among so many—so palpably, so hopelessly inadequate, so absurd even that the disciples themselves seem scarcely to have given them a thought, they did not put them forward, but Jesus Himself by His question, “How many loaves have ye?” had to draw their attention to them. And then as we see how He takes them from their hands and blesses them, and gives them

back, and they expand and develop and multiply till they become adequate to satisfy the hunger of that great crowd, does not a glorious law of all God's dealing with us open out before us? Do we not feel how under His supreme care, His divine husbandry, nothing can be lost, but that all that is in our lives, however poor, however stunted, however mean, can be, and if only we do not forbid will be, conserved by our heavenly Father the husbandman, and made by Him the basis of a more beautiful thing, a greater strength, a truer manhood than has ever seemed possible to us?

And as we pass from the more general relation of Christ to the world in all its infinitely varied aspects to His relation to the various religions of the world, we know that as regards Judaism, the truth we have been dwelling on finds general and ready recognition. "I am not come to destroy but to fulfil." These words, which as we have seen might serve as a motto of all Christ's dealings with the world, were used by Him more particularly in relation to Judaism. They affirm the truth—which we have more or less apprehended—that He came not as the interrupter and destroyer, but as the interpreter and perfecter of the Mosaic Law, lifting it up to a dignity, and giving it a worth and meaning that could never have been traced in it before, at the very time that He put it, in its outward form, on one side, and claimed, its work of preparation and foreshadowing having been ended, to take its place Himself, and carry out to their fullest strength and beauty the shadows, the hints, the suggestions of divine things which it had contained.

But if as regards our Lord's relation to Judaism this truth has been clearly seen and more or less consistently maintained, it is far otherwise when we pass to the other chief religions of the world, more particularly those with which by the widening of our commerce and national responsibilities during the last century we have been brought into such curiously close contact. The title of one of the first books published on Mahomedanism in England, "The True Nature of Imposture displayed in the life of Mahomed," is familiar to many of us, and has often been referred to both from sympathetic and from strongly opposing standpoints. We are not concerned now to enquire whether, or how far, the charge laid in this title is true or how much there may be either in the personal history of Mahomed or in his creed to justify it, but this we may say, that it clearly does not indicate any smallest grain of sympathy, any slightest wish to see what there was of truth in the very remarkable system of which it treated, what it had supplied, if anything, amidst the varied needs of man, in what it had found its strength, wherein it was related to Christianity, except in the broadest way as false to true, as darkness

to light, or what of hint or foreshadowing or craving in it could be taken up and claimed, satisfied and perfected by the faith of Jesus Christ. Nor is this an isolated instance. Rather may we say that broadly speaking, and with not a few exceptions, some remarkable ones, the standpoint here assumed has been a not uncommon one alike for writers at home and still more for those who in the mission field have been brought into closest, and oftentimes most repellent, contact with all that is foulest and least Christlike in the Mahomedan or heathen faiths, and who have thus been led to direct their strength almost wholly to the exposure from an absolutely foreign and hostile standpoint, and if it may be the destruction, of such pernicious error.

And, indeed, it may not be denied either on the one hand that theoretically it is most necessary, with a view to the spread of the truth, to lay bare at times with a strong unsparing hand the error which is blighting and blinding the souls of men, and demonstrate its utter powerlessness to answer the needs or fulfil the demands of one made in the image of God ; or, on the other, that as a matter of fact those who have chosen this line have done and are doing much good work for Christ in the dark places of the earth ; and that much of whatever progress in the mission field has hitherto been made must be ascribed to them. It is foolish to let our theories prevail against facts, and because we do not wholly approve of the method blind our eyes to fruit which may have been granted of the Lord of the harvest to the workers. Yet neither are we bound, because fruit more or less has been so granted, to approve the method, assuming that it is right in itself or the best possible, or even to suppress the expression of our belief that there is another, a higher standpoint from which the work may be approached, and that, as it seems to us, the fruit of the labours of those very men, able, earnest, and loving as they were, might have been still far more abundant had they themselves approached it from that other standpoint. And in a very special degree at the present time it would seem that we owe it to our deepest convictions and to much of what is best and strongest in the thought of our age, to strive to place ourselves in a more sympathetic attitude and to claim to be in the power of Christ the interpreters and fulfillers of all the past history of the world, more especially of all the blind cravings for and feelings after God on the part of men which form the deepest, most abiding part of that history. I say this is a special feature of our own time. There is much to make it so. In the first place, the very widening of our commerce and our national relations with the enormous growth of our empire has necessarily tended to break down the narrowness and isolation from which we regarded all outside ourselves with

doubt and suspicion. If this has its dangers, as it assuredly has, if we feel that a false cosmopolitanism may for one thing by effacing distinctions which lie in our very nature as man, make impossible the very unity and catholicity its advocates profess to seek, for only in the recognition of diversity and of the relationship which is thus possible between the various members, can the true unity of the body be attained; if, moreover, as a deeper, sadder loss still widening of sympathy is too often perverted into a loss of all definiteness of personal creed and clearness of personal conviction and of the eternal distinctions of right and wrong—this and all such like perversions surely ought not to drive us back into a narrow reaction against that widening, enlarging spirit of sympathy and fellowship which is after all the very glory of the thought of our age. We know that all such perversions of this God-like spirit *are* perversions; that all that is God-like and noblest and best is above all exposed to and certain to suffer from such perversions, and yet that they must be met, and denied, and confuted, not by abandoning, but by asserting the truth of which they are the corruption, and which alone can win back for us and to us that which in such corruption has been lost.

Again, it is not only to an enlarging sense of national obligation and relation, due chiefly to increased intercourse with and juster appreciation of those who have hitherto been strangers, that we may trace this change of view, but may we not say that in the moral attitude of our time towards all such questions there is something which answers, if I may so speak, to the law of the conservation of energy in the material world—a sense that the past of any nation or of any creed cannot be wholly lost, simply swept away as meaningless and useless? In this there is a semblance of waste and caprice from which the truest instincts of those who have entered most into the purposes and methods of God's dealings with His creation rebel. We demand not that all the groans and sighs and struggles and would-be growth of the past should be swept away, but that in the truest sense the law of development and evolution should find its place, and Christ, if He be Christ indeed, should be seen to be able to gather up and to carry on to its proper consummation, not the anticipations only, but the struggles, aye and the moans, the failures, the sorrows of the world. Each age has its own lesson to learn of the meaning and methods of the Cross and the Resurrection and the Ascension, and the Mission as on this day of the Holy Spirit, and what that lesson for ourselves is we can learn, we shall only learn, not by opposing ourselves, in faithlessness and a practical denial of the present sovereignty and omnipotence of our risen Lord,

to all the movements of thought and life and action that are pressing around us, but by throwing ourselves into them, strong in the faith of Christ, viewing them and interpreting them in the light of His Resurrection.

And once again, to Englishmen always perhaps, and certainly now, in their practical positive matter-of-fact way of looking at things, mere destruction is always repellent. The words of a great American preacher will, I suspect, find a ready response in many a heart here. "Who would go a hundred miles merely to make a Mahomedan disbelieve Mahomed? who would not go half round the world to make him believe Christ and know the richness of the Saviour?" Certainly, for my own part, home as I am from India chiefly to ask of Cambridge to give us of her best for an extension of our work in the mission field, I feel that the call will come to the best minds and hearts among you, those whom we need most, infinitely more powerfully and attractively if I ask you to help me not in uprooting and destroying so much as in perfecting, correcting, consummating the faith of the many millions of that land. And why is the appeal thus put more attractive? Is it not because it thus has greater truth? Is it not that this standpoint is that of St Paul, who believed, who knew, that God made of one every nation of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed seasons, and the bounds of their habitation; that they should seek God, if haply they might feel after Him and find Him? What do these words mean if not this, that not Christians only, but all the nations of the earth are under the care of the Almighty Father, that He really is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, who in things moral surely no less than things material ruleth over all the kingdoms of the world and giveth them to whomsoever He will, and disposes, and guides, and governs all with this supremest purpose, that through diverse disciplines and manifold paths, alike through that of truth which they have and through the hunger and thirst for that which they lack, He may gather up all the nations of the earth into one in Christ, into the fulness of Him in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, and who filleth all in all? It is in this aspect surely that the work and relation of Christ to the world is viewed by him who describes Him as the light which lighteneth every man coming into the world—it is in this aspect that St Paul viewed Him and proclaimed Him, it is in thus viewing and thus proclaiming Him that we shall enter most into their spirit, and thus entering shall we most effectively win to our side as a priceless ally in the fight the *testimonium animæ naturalitür Christianæ*.

To illustrate the principle for which I have been contending, let

me turn for a few moments to Hinduism, the faith of nearly two hundred millions of our fellow-subjects in India. What in that is there on which we can lay hold in the way I have suggested, as anticipations, foreshadowings, feelings after the fulness of the truth as it is in Christ Jesus?

I will pass by sacrifice, which as it is the most widely spread probably of all religious rites, so is also of deepest import and form, the most remarkable of all the points of connexion between the universal religious instincts of man and their satisfaction in Christ. It is not, remember, as absent from Hinduism that I omit it, for its prevalence is far greater probably than almost any here present have any idea of. I believe I am right in saying that all the meat killed in Calcutta—including that provided for and purchased by Englishmen there—is offered at the shrine of the goddess Kali and dedicated to her. And so far north as Jeypur, though the more characteristic rites of Hinduism disappear, it may roughly be said, exactly in proportion as you enter the more northern zone of old Mahomedan domination, I have myself seen the daily sacrifice of a goat and a kid to the same dread deity. I pass it by only because it is so universal, and choose rather three points more or less peculiar to Hinduism.

And most prominent of all take that caste system which is so constantly referred to and with such abundant justice as one of the greatest curses of the land. Of the mischief it is doing at present no one can speak too highly. For one thing it has so dominated the entire life of man there, and has forced into such exclusive prominence the social instinct and the social aspect of life, that all individuality and clear strong personality, all sense therefore of personal responsibility and relation to God, is almost wholly lost. In the words of an acute observer of Indian life and thought, "There is in the system of caste no sense of personal responsibility, and the social cravings are so far more than satisfied, that society submerges and swallows up the individual in itself, and wraps the welcomed swathing bands of infancy round the limbs of men. Thus, there is a positive surfeit of the social appetite. Society wanting in all elements of greatness and dividing men from each other by barriers which are in every sense inseparable, stagnates, yet lives on, stifles aspirations, and yet in some sense satisfies desire, crushes conscience to death, while it fills life with a religion, subdues a man to meanness of servility in which he ceases even to care for being free."¹ These words may be sufficient and more than sufficient

¹ *Indian Missions*, p. 38. A letter addressed to the Archbishop of Canterbury by the Bishop of Bombay. (Rivingtons, 1873.)

without my trying to bring before you in detail any of the other terrible evils which accompany the caste system—its crushing of all human sympathies outside the narrowest limits, its deadening of all spirit of enterprise and free movement, its purely physical conditions, its want of all moral aspiration and power. And yet in the face of this what are we to do? It is easy to turn round and denounce the whole system as false, a lie, of the devil, and call upon men to break off from it. This has been often done, and the most unfettered individualism has been offered as a substitute in its place. But it may well be doubted whether the evil of the latter spirit, if it ever became dominant in a country like India, would not surpass the evils of the former, whether their last state under such teaching might not be worse than their first. Truer surely would it be to point out to them that while in its negative, exclusive, narrowing aspect their theory of society is false and as the best spirits among themselves are beginning plainly to see, fearfully harmful, yet in its positive assertion of the brotherhood of men, of their being members of one body in which no man liveth to himself and no man dieth to himself, but in which if one member suffer all the members suffer with it, or if one member is honoured all the members rejoice with it—in all this it is most true, and we would call upon them not to abandon it, but to enter in deed and in truth into the fullest possession of it in Christ, in whom there can be neither Jew nor Greek, neither bond nor free, neither male nor female, for all are one in Christ Jesus. So avoiding the dangers of an untempered individualism on the one hand, and with all the hardening, cramping, degrading condition of the present caste system swept away on the other, may the country pass to a fuller, newer and yet thoroughly congenial and natural life.

Take again the theory of transmigration of souls. While there is much of error in this as at present held, notably in the confusion between the soul and spirit of man made in the image and with the capacity for the knowledge of God, and the life of animals which it introduces, as well as in other respects, yet may we not confidently say that two great truths underlie it, and in virtue of those truths may we not here again present ourselves less as its opponents and would-be destroyers than as its interpreters and fulfillers? For in the first place it is an assertion of that continuous existence, that personal immortality for which the soul of man craves with such an undying unquenchable hope, and with which has always been felt to be bound up the highest and noblest possibilities of human life. That this should have been grasped so firmly, even if in perverted, distorted form, is surely a thing to be thankful for, one more instance that

God's Spirit has not been wholly withdrawn from that nation. And in the second place the doctrine of transmigration would seem to be the assertion in an uncouth and repulsive form of the permanence of the consequence of all our actions. It is viewed indeed in a purely mechanical way and, the idea of righteousness as a personal relation having been in no wise grasped, there is neither any place found for the possibility of forgiveness, nor is it conceived of as possible that a wholly new element of divine nature should enter as a new and living factor into the life of man and by thus materially modifying the constituent parts modify not less materially the issues and destiny of the whole. Still, under whatever of corruption and abuse, we would seem to have here the underlying assertion of that truth which is one of the bases not only of morality, but of the whole orderly course of the world's working, the truth, namely, that what a man soweth that shall he also reap, for "he that soweth unto his own flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption, but he that soweth unto the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap eternal life." Here then again we step forward, denying the error, it is true, but denying it rather by offering the perfected truth in its place, even Christ who is the Truth, whose Resurrection is the one supreme vindication of that hope which seemed sometimes so hopeless, so impossible, while His divine Personality is no less the pledge than the groundwork of our own, into which our little fragmentary broken lives can fit, and find in that large unbroken life permanence meaning consistency. "I am He that liveth and was dead, and behold I am alive for evermore," and "Because I live ye shall live also."¹

And yet once more turn to those incarnations which form such a very remarkable feature of Hindu mythology and in which it contrasts most remarkably perhaps of all with the Mahomedanism which places so absolute a gulf between Creator and creature and so sternly refuses any smallest effort to bridge that gulf. Terribly perverted and corrupt indeed these Hindu incarnations often are, and they exercise a fearfully corrupting influence to this day on the life of the people, helping to obscure some of the most elementary principles of morality, and utterly degrading God to man rather than raising man in any sense up to participation in the Divine Nature. Yet once again, must we not admit, nay, welcome, their infinite significance seen in the light of the gospel of Christ, as declaring that between man and God, in Whose Image and for conformity to Whose likeness he has been made, there is not the absolute, hopeless, abysmal gulf which Mahomedanism

¹ See "Sermons" by Rev. Philip Brooks, p. 213.

would place, but that of all mankind, in varying measure, it is true that their souls thirst for Him, their flesh longs after Him, even though it be in a barren and dry land, where no water is?

In these and many more such ways we may, if we will, come before India, not as the setters forth of wholly new truth which attaches itself to and explains and perfects nothing in all the long history of their past, but rather as taking up and claiming, interpreting, purifying, perfecting, and fulfilling that past. And may God grant that the day may quickly come when our English nation as a nation, and our English Church which has such singular, such unique endowments for the task, may wake up more than it has yet to a consciousness of the extraordinary privilege and dignity, and therewith the infinitely solemn responsibility, which is entailed on us by the possession of that vast dependency. If ever the hand of God could be traced in any history it is not too much to say that it can be traced with quite peculiar clearness in the steps by which a little trading company, entering that great continent without the thought or wish of anything beyond a petty trade, gradually expanded into one of the most important and glorious empires the world has ever seen. And is it too much to say that our greatest national glory or our deepest national shame will in the eye of history turn on the way in which we recognize our responsibilities and discharge our obligations to that land more perhaps than on any other single aspect of our national life? That our contact with India must, whether we will it or not, be fraught with issues of the most momentous importance to that land is patent to everyone who is the least acquainted with the conditions of life there. Even putting all distinctive missionary effort out of the question, the mere contact of Western thought and culture and education is inevitably breaking up the older forms of Hindu thought. But it lies with us whether that contact shall be charged with infinite blessing leading them on to a higher, deeper, truer faith and a new national life, or whether, cutting them adrift from their old moorings, we leave them without Christ, strangers from the covenant of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But if, indeed, this is the return we make them, if, after holding the land for our own benefit and skimming it of its choicest productions, and pouring into it, as a happy solution of difficulties at home, in ever increasing streams our sons as civilians, soldiers, engineers, professional men, men of business, artisans, mechanics, and the like, we express our inability or our unwillingness to satisfy its deeper need, to minister to its sore sickness, how think you will this stand in the eyes of a righteous God who loveth righteousness, whose countenance will behold the

thing that is just? Let us be very sure that, to put it on no higher ground, if we thus betray the trust He has reposed in us and neglect the marvellous opportunity He has put before us, He will assuredly tear the kingdom from us, and give it to some neighbour of ours, be it who it may, who is better than us. And that England has as yet in any kind of adequate degree realised her responsibilities, or that the efforts she is at present making to win the nations of India to the faith of Christ are in any degree commensurate to the immensity of the task and the very singular and almost unique difficulties which beset it, no one surely could for a moment maintain.

As one looks round a congregation such as that which fills this place this minute, and realises how enormous are the potentialities for the future which it contains, and thinks what it would mean for India if even any fraction, any proportion which could on the most ultra-moderate estimate of her claims be computed just, were to devote themselves to her, one cannot but pray the Lord of the Harvest that as on that first Whitsunday so once again the Holy Spirit may descend in life-giving inspiring power, awakening a truer sense of our position, and providing a more abundant supply of workers. And such a movement would be twice blest—blessing the Church which gives no less than the land which receives, for the very life of the Church is sacrifice—to lose its life is to gain it. To it if it be indeed the very body of Christ must apply with supremest force the principle, “There is that scattereth and yet increaseth, there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty.”

Give then ungrudgingly, unstintingly to the nations of the world at large, and more peculiarly to India, as it has been given more peculiarly to us. Give of your best, yourselves, your sons and daughters, your prayers, your sympathy, and your alms. “Give, and it shall be given unto you, good measure, pressed down and shaken together and running over, shall men give into your bosoms.” Give, that you may hasten the day for which all that is most of Christ within us looks and longs and labours and waits and prays, the day when there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the seas; for Christ shall be all in all. Amen.





