







OUR MISSIONS

A LETTER

TO

HIS GRACE

THE ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY

BY

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OUR MISSIONS

MY LORD ARCHBISHOP,

The happy conjunction of the Bishop of Bombay's letter on Missions with the day of Intercession appointed by your Grace, will, I doubt not, lead many to take up the subject seriously who may not heretofore have given it the consideration it deserves. Suffer me, as one deeply interested in the work, and sympathizing with the spirit of earnest faith and zeal which has prompted the utterances of that remarkable letter, to address to your Grace some suggestions which have occurred to my own mind. And first, whilst I greatly admire the tone of the Bishop of Bombay's letter, I will at once observe that I do not entirely agree with him. He writes under the fresh honest impulse of one conscious of the magnitude of the work before him, and who has just realized the feebleness of the efforts hitherto made to carry it on.

And his Diocese is one which may well impress him with the strongest sense of the insufficiency of our past efforts. In Madras, or, in a less degree, in Calcutta, he would have been able to give a more hopeful and cheering report of Missions as

they are. In the former, indeed, there are districts in which Christianity is already a power—where it has asserted its claim on the acceptance of entire sections of the population. In both of these Dioceses it is a leaven secretly working, an idea taking as yet many forms, but tending in the same direction, to the uprooting of idolatry and superstition; and whilst many of those who are influenced by it are at first carried away by a reaction which acts as the negation of Religion, and others embrace for a time a cold Deism, I have little doubt myself that these are but phases into which minds, necessarily unsettled and shaken in their convictions, pass, not unnaturally, before they settle into a reasonable and well-grounded acceptance of the great Truth which has for the first time confronted them. What I have chiefly regretted in connection with this part of my subject, was the injudicious treatment of one of the leaders in this new movement. I allude to the reception of Baboo Chunder Sen, who was allowed to return to India under the false impression that in England we saw little difference between his immature and unsatisfying system, and the great Christian Creed.

But as yet the Bishop of Bombay has little to do with such questions or such hopes. He has an enormous heathen population—I use the word in no harsh sense—I mean that they are not believers in the true God; that they do not know, for they have

not heard of—Jesus Christ Whom He has sent. And of these races there is one—that of the Parsees—requiring the most judicious treatment possible, and learning far greater than I fear belongs to many of our Missionaries, whilst to meet them he has but a few scattered English clergymen — not, indeed, as one has most unjustly described them, in common with the rest of our Missionary brethren, selfish and lazy, but earnest and faithful men—it is not their fault that they are few—a mere handful, where we want a host. What I mean to assert is simply that we have not occupied the ground in anything like sufficient strength; that our organization at home is wholly inadequate; that our very conception of the task before us is not worthy of so great an object, and our support of it in men and funds insufficient, and (what is almost worse) varying and uncertain.

And the great value of the Bishop of Bombay's well-timed and vigorous letter is that it tears the veil of self-conceit from our eyes, and shows us the actual state of things—lays bare the terrible condition of the vast population committed to our oversight in the mysterious Providence of God, and calls on us as with a trumpet-sound to take the field, under the banner of our Lord and Saviour, against the “principalities and powers,” — the false creeds and debasing superstition which have so long held back the races of India from all true progress. The Bishop has

but too truly described them as “crushed and ground to dust by a religion which” (I quote his words in their substance), “while it idolizes life in a brute, . . . looks with scorn and contempt upon the bodies and souls of men.”

There are three points which I would venture to lay before your Grace, in connection with the Bishop of Bombay’s statements. The present state of Missions, his proposals for their improvement, and some suggestions which I would make, not as a change, but as an additional feature in our organization of Missions.

First, I cannot take the same view with the Bishop of the present position of our Missionaries among the heathen, either as to their weakness (except in point of numbers), or the principle on which they work. That many of them are married, so far from being a hindrance, is, I believe, an element of strength and success. In point of climate, there is no greater difficulty for the wives than for their husbands. They are themselves often most useful partakers of the labours of their husbands. In schools, in tending the sick, and often in gaining influence with the men under teaching, they are not unfrequently singularly successful; whilst there are some functions, and those most important, of the labour which they can alone discharge. The Zenana Missions are of course entirely theirs; and, I must observe, a married Missionary has access to the houses of

natives, in some cases, where it would be difficult for one unmarried to enter the family circle on terms of familiar intercourse.

I do not consider the comparative costliness of the two systems is quite correctly stated by the Bishop. With the exception of the children, for whom provision must be made, a clergyman and his wife, living as the Missionaries certainly do, simply and most economically, are, after all, the cheapest arrangement as a matter of finance. The wife has her own especial sphere of usefulness in domestic cares, and frequently wards off the approach of sickness by her foresight,—far better, surely, than to encounter the long array of risks, expenses, and sorrows consequent upon failing health. There is a good deal said on the subject of self-denial in Missionaries, which is more attractive in theory than sound in practice. In the climate of India, it is quite a mistake to increase unnecessarily the trials to which the English constitution must be exposed. The truth is, that privations are inevitable. Strengthening food it is difficult to provide. What we should scarcely designate as luxuries at home, are there sometimes necessities, and often not to be procured. Climate itself constitutes so severe a strain upon the strength of the system, that to add, I will not say fanciful, but unnecessary and additional austerities, would be perilous, and often fatal.

I must here observe that I do not consider that it

would be wise to present the English or European character to the natives of a different race, in a false or assumed guise. They are well aware, that with us the use of animal food and wine, and the marriage of our clergy, are national customs, and they would quickly notice the seeming inconsistency of an order of men sent to teach them, having different habits to the rest of their own countrymen. To "become all things to all men," did not, I think, in S. Paul's case, mean that he pretended to be a Gentile amongst Gentiles, but that with either Jew or Gentile, he used his lawful liberty according to the expediency of a wise charity. Moreover, we have to uproot a false idea of merit in self-abnegation, much the same in character as that which the same Apostle spoke of as "will-worship and humility and neglecting of the body."* To those who know how the whole theory of virtue with these races is based upon this false principle, I need not prove that it is important that we should not, even indirectly, give countenance to such a belief.

Do not let me be mistaken, I would not say one word to throw discredit upon the strictest self-denial of Christian ministers, either at home or abroad; and such things must, in both cases, be left to their own judgment. I am defending our present Missionaries from the imputation, not of luxurious habits, for that were

* Col. ii, 23.

unnecessary, but of having adopted an unwise system in carrying their English habits of religious life with them into heathen lands. I believe that "honesty is the best policy," and I give the natives of India credit for quite sufficient intelligence to appreciate the simple example of an English clergyman's family life. I will only notice further in the Bishop's statement, that I think, unconsciously, he overstates the expense of Missionaries. This varies, of course, with circumstances, and especially, is affected by the success of the Mission. Thus, it will cost double to establish a Mission in China, where, at present, our success is small, to what it would in Madras, where native clergy are being rapidly introduced, and where the converts, now numerous, are contributing to the support of their clergy; but heathens will not, as Englishmen seem to expect, pay for their conversion. The earlier stages of any Mission are the most expensive; the last is that of the self-supporting church and congregation.

I pass to the Bishop of Bombay's suggestions as to our future Missions. He would establish brotherhoods of clergy and laity. He considers that we should present the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ in the form of a visible polity; that from the first we should show them the beautiful and perfect order of the system which we expect them to join. There is so much of truth in this, so much that no English Churchman can fail to

respect and admire, that I must preface my observations on this part of his letter with the assurance that I am not his critic, much less his opponent. But I am constrained to speak out of my own experience, in modification of his advice. It is by preaching, in the strictest sense, that the Gospel will be spread. The very period in which this, one of the various means of grace, has its especial importance, is the earliest—the infancy—of a Church. Even Baptism, so closely connected with discipleship, must follow, not precede, the conviction produced by “hearing.” And, I must say that to those who have seen the first dawns of Christian belief in heathen minds, there can be no doubt of the true source and secret of Missionary success. To see, after months of careless inattention, the sudden change to earnest and intent regard; to listen, as I have done, to the hurried question, “What shall we do?”—to describe this is but to reproduce the Scriptural account of the first conversions. And what was the word preached, or proclaimed, that led to this? It was the love of God the Father as manifested in his Son Jesus Christ. The Apostles did not stop to prove even their own commission, much less to describe the system of the new community they were founding. All this, however, followed in its turn. The converts baptized joined themselves to the Apostles’ Doctrine and Fellowship, and in these, with breaking of Bread and Prayers,

“continued steadfast,” that is, were at once united in worship, and built up in the Faith which they had embraced. It is the same, I need scarcely assure your Grace, with the work in our own day. The Gospel message changes men’s hearts (it is the work of the Spirit), and when so changed the Church is their safety and their fold of security, but Christ is the Door: “By Me,” as He said, if they enter in, they shall “go in and out, and find pasture.”

I would say more. I believe that even those who enter the Mission field with far other views—divided from us, their brethren (if they are of Christ), and with a wholly inadequate sense of the necessity for union amongst Christ’s people, succeed often in producing a sincere conviction of the truth of Christ’s Gospel. I cannot, with the Bishop, think that we may ignore their success; rather, believing in its reality, I anticipate the future union of their converts with ourselves. Here again I may adduce the intelligence of natives in support of my views. I have never heard the distinction between the essentials of Christian belief and the additions which, however unconsciously, a sectarian preacher has to make in order to enrol the convert in the ranks of his followers, so clearly drawn as by one of themselves, a native dissenting convert. Greatly we should weaken the Church, if we descended to the same level, and did not follow the true Apostolic

precept, determined "to know nothing save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified."

Again, let me not be misunderstood. I honour, more than I can well express, the Missionary zeal of those bodies of Christians, who are not externally in accord with ourselves. Far from grudging them the triumphs they have won, I rejoice with them; and I fully believe that the great work of Christian conversion is going on by their instrumentality, as well as by our own. I differ from them in believing that they can perpetuate the sect as, happily, they can sow the seed of Christian truth in heathen lands. Their good work is but hastening the day of glad reunion amongst believers in all lands.

The Bishop of Bombay suggests that brotherhoods of clergy should be sent, as at once freed from some hindrances which attach in his estimation to the married, and as more likely to settle permanently into a change of habits adapted to a new climate, and a differing race. He would oppose caste to caste; borrowing, in some degree, his system from those he would convert, and meeting organization with organization; founded, of course, on a truer principle, and only in appearance agreeing with the human system which he seeks to uproot and overthrow.

Now, I shall not adduce arguments against him on this head, but I am glad that he does not tie us down to his own plans. He is, as I have known

him of old, in the best sense, liberal and comprehensive. He invites us to action on his own system or another combined with it. If we do not like brotherhoods, or a celibate Missionary staff, at least, he urges, let Missionaries be sent, earnest devoted men, in greater numbers, with better organization. Let us do something more worthy the cause we undertake! Let it not rest with two Societies, however excellent,—ill-supported, I fear, we must with the Bishop admit,—to discharge the entire debt and duty of the great Church of England to the heathen, brought within her reach, as they are to no other Church in the whole world. In all this we surely must agree with him,—however we may differ as to details, certainly no words of mine are intended to weaken but to enforce his stirring appeal to the consciences of Englishmen who have faith in their Church and Creed.

I have only to add to these remarks such suggestions as my own Missionary experience has led me to think worthy of the attention of those who in England, under your Grace's wise and temperate guidance, control our Missions abroad. I make them with hesitation, I acknowledge, not from any doubt of their being, in the main, worthy of trust, but because I fear they will seem to contradict some very widely-spread notions on the subject which have obtained and preserved their hold on the minds of the great

majority, and especially of the most devoted adherents of this great cause, now unhappily suffering detraction from opponents, and contempt from worldly-wise men, who as they would ignore religion in the amelioration of their own countrymen are only consistent in denying its value in the regeneration of other nations.

I would then, if your Grace will permit me to advise, have our Missionaries enrolled on a different system to that which at present prevails—which is to take for *permanent* service a few carefully selected and trained men,—I would encourage young men, not uneducated, yet not of necessity specially trained, to go for a term of years into the Mission field, to serve there (as at present, the most earnest of our younger clergy take curacies in large towns) and then to return, if they desire it, and bring the experience obtained by labour abroad amongst heathens to the Mission work at home, amongst Christians, so called, but often requiring a treatment not so unlike that which Missionaries have to adopt as we commonly suppose.

I would, if your Grace will let me say it, entirely alter the use of this word Missionary, and with the narrow meaning now given to it, I should wish the erroneous conception of the work it expresses also to disappear. The clergy at home are not one whit less truly Missionaries than those who preach to heathens—and the distinction between the

home and foreign field of labour rests on no grounds but those of a prevalent misconception with regard to the nature of Missions to the heathen, as distinct from a ministry to Christians in our own land—*viz.* that the former must be such for life—that it is equivalent to a forsaking of our sacred calling to exchange the one field of our labours for the other: such a view could not be based from Scripture precept or Apostolic example. And whilst it was quite lawful, and was doubtless expedient, for the Church to discourage the return of Missionaries in times of difficult communications with foreign lands, it was at all times a question of expediency, and at the present has in some measure changed.

I must observe that my remarks would not apply to Bishops, whose tenure of their sees would continue the same as that of their brethren at home, only resigning them for ill-health, or change of their sphere of episcopal duty. And of other clergy I desire only to create an additional body of men willing to answer, without hesitation or delay, a call such as that of our brother, made, too, at such a time, finding us on our knees with the cry on our lips, "Send labourers into Thy vineyard." On reading his words, I could not but remember how often I had experienced the like want—how, fresh from the sight of unoccupied fields of labour, I wrote urgently to friends for clergy; how, not

obtaining them, I used such materials as I could find; good coming, indeed, out of the evil, in that I was led to ordain a native clergy, earlier, perhaps, than otherwise I might have ventured to do. Even this did not remove the necessity for Englishmen to superintend the work, if it lessened the necessity that they should be previously trained themselves, since intercourse with the native clergy would have given them the opportunity of acquiring on the spot all they would need of practical training for their new labours, thus suddenly undertaken, and especially give them the best opportunity for acquiring the language.

I should be sorry to lead your Grace to suppose that I wished to discourage either the devotion of a life to Missions in heathen lands, or the careful and special training for the work, of those who are willing to make a sacrifice so blessed. My object is to induce a number of men in active youth, to whom it would be, in fact, no sacrifice, to make the experiment, and enter the Mission field, at least for a time. To the Bishops whom they will thus serve, their labours will be most welcome (I can speak from my own personal knowledge); for themselves, they will gain in the experience, and in the new interests and sympathies they will acquire, what will more than compensate them for some loss of advantage, as it might be considered, in their home prospects.

I will say a word on this last objection. I have more than once been pained to hear clergymen speak of the return of a Missionary with a sort of jealousy; as if it were an encroachment on their rights or interests. No such feeling can be justified on reflection. As a mere matter of calculation, they would gain by the absence of the class of clergy I speak of, because on the spot they would command advantages of priority in preferment, if such an argument is gravely to be entertained. And I must point out that many would not return. I am not speaking of that which cuts short our labours alike at home and abroad, namely, the sudden and early call to our account by the Master; I mean that no inconsiderable portion of those who are induced to try the Mission field, will elect to remain in it, rather than return. There is so much to cheer the soldier of Christ who enters on that warfare. The contest, though arduous—often perilous, is yet so full of attraction, its disappointments are so quickly forgotten in success, that it gains on a man each year in absorbing interest. It is only those who never felt its joys, who are ever conjuring up the vision of men dissatisfied, giving service grudgingly, ever looking for the opportunity to throw off its chains. To such, every Missionary seen at home is a sort of triumph, if not an object of reproach. Did any of these strict censors, when they heard from one who told him

his experience of labour in some distant field, care to follow his subsequent history for a brief year or two, to know if he returned to his distant sphere of duties ; or to ask where he ended his little-known, yet useful career ? I remember one such as I now describe, to whose usefulness I could testify, at whose side I have travelled for days, when he was little fit to undergo the fatigue. He had been at home for a short period to recruit his strength, and there, I know the recital of his simple story encouraged some to have faith in the Church's work. For a short time only he shared in it after the time to which I allude. He was bearing, almost alone, the responsibilities of an important station when death released him to his reward.

I do not wish to avoid the possible objection, that some, labouring faithfully at home, may find themselves displaced occasionally by those who had left England ; but surely the latter field is so large and important that it will have room for all. The cry "the labourers are few" is as loud here as there : and if men are more valuable for possessing larger experience of life, broader sympathies, deeper insight into the wants and requirements of their fellows ; to say that these are gained, at least as quickly in distant lands, and among differing races, is of itself a sufficient reason for the Church's employment of them where she needs them. It is, in short, a question of her needs, not their or others' personal interests.

Let me, without offence to any, say a word of the past. I do believe that many of our earnest pastors, zealous for Christ, and anxious to win souls, but given to extremes, on one side or the other, in these days of much controversy, would, in the Mission field, have learned to manifest a like zeal, without the addition of the excess or peculiarity which now hinders their usefulness, and narrows their sympathies. It is a common saying, and true as it is common, that our two rival Societies can work harmoniously abroad. What is the reason, but that the Missionaries of each, individually, forget strife, in their common labours? I would add that it is the blessing of work among the heathen, that we learn to value at their right estimate, what I will call the fundamentals of our Religion, as distinct from its accessories—it is, in fact, in these that amongst the heathen the power of the Gospel is known. When they have once learned to know Him we preach to them, and the “power of His sufferings,” they are not easily led to attach either too great or too little value to those external things which testify of Him.

The question remains, are we to leave it in the hands of our two Societies, or of some new organization, to summon this larger company of labourers for the Church’s work abroad? I answer, I would both use the Societies more extensively than at present, and add the machinery of a Home Diocesan Board of Missions, under each Bishop—

possibly a central one in each Province, connected with Convocation. These would both raise necessary funds, and arrange with the Colonial and Missionary Bishops for the sending out additional clergy.

Nor do I think it would be impossible to have some interchange of operations with the Societies for Home Work. We want quicker circulation in these, as it were, arteries of the Church: and if I have said anything which seemed to imply unfair preference of the "Missionary" to the "Curate," I would gladly express my sense of the abiding qualities in the latter, which stamp his true value, wherever placed. My scheme, in short, would only break down an existing barrier between our clergy (as of late we have seen done in our army), as I think and hope, to the detriment of none, and yet to the perceptible increase of the number of those willing to undertake foreign work. The actual result would be, in my belief, a permanent increase, both in what we call Missionary and Home clergy,—an increase, we must remember, equally required in either field—we should, in fact, to use another military illustration, "mobilize" and unite our spiritual forces—whilst our Colonial Churches would be, not imitations, but parts and "very members" of the great National Church.

I must apologize to your Grace for entering into these details, not, I hope, thereby lessening in

the slightest degree the force of my brother's appeal. The opinions which I have ventured to express, I entertained, and even avowed, at the Board of the "Society for the Propagation of the Gospel," long before I had any expectation of leaving England. My ten years of actual foreign labour has but confirmed my conviction of their soundness.

I would not draw too fair a picture of the Missionary's life, full, as it most frequently is, of unavoidable privation, but I would wish our English brethren to understand that it has peculiar attractions, and irrespectively of the highest motives of duty, few of those once engrossed in its labours desire to relinquish them. Where we have to deal with severity of climate, and especially the serious effects of a life in the tropics, we cannot, of course, calculate on a large proportion being able to remain more than a limited number of years; and where they have exceeded the period unwisely, their services, as I can testify, have in some cases been of little avail. There are also causes besides those of individual constitution, such as the health, or education of children, which equally affect the resident in such parts of the world.

I have already shown that I do not consider these drawbacks a sufficient reason for confining our choice of labourers to celibates, and thus forfeiting the great advantage of the influence of Christian family life on heathen races; but to enlist a body

of younger men, willing and able to give a few years to this interesting work in the outset of active life, would be, I believe, alike useful to themselves and the Church at home, on the one hand; and welcome to the sorely-tried Missionary Church, on the other.

I will not go out of my way to meet the attacks of those who affect to have no faith in our efforts to convert the heathen. I have still less sympathy with such as affect to take the heathen's side, and uphold the superiority of their condition to that which we offer them in exchange. I have lived amongst them and learned to know their true feelings, and wherever Christianity has been embraced by any, I know that it has filled an existing void, and given exactly what our human nature needs in its consolations and its promises. I feel myself closer to them by such sympathy, and am emboldened to plead for them as my children, and to echo the words of the zealous Bishop, whose letter has induced me to address your Grace.

There is a work, great and real, which, though late, we have begun. If driven out of India to-morrow, our Christianity — yes ! even the Christianity of the Church of England !—would not cease to exist. It is stronger than that of Rome, because it is more truly Catholic, being Scriptural. It will draw to itself the several earnest expressions of the same Faith, taught by

some, as sincerely if not as perfectly. Above all, if we were so degenerate as to suffer this great nation to deny its Religion, in this age of doubt and questioning of sacred things, it is my belief that there is, out of England, yet of English origin, a Christianity that would re-echo to our shores. From New Zealand, from West and South Africa, from North America, from the Isles of the Sea, and lastly, from India itself, would be heard the voice of expostulation and reproach,—“O foolish—who hath bewitched you that ye should not obey The Truth; before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth?”*

Let us, my Lord Archbishop, as on the 20th of December we prayed for labourers, now boldly send them forth. They will come, I doubt not, if we summon them with an unhesitating and clear invitation. Let that invitation go forth from the chair of Canterbury.

I am, my Lord Archbishop,

Your Grace's most faithful Servant,

PIERS C. CLAUGHTON,

BISHOP.

* Gal. iii. 1.



