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Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in
Foreign Parts.

REPORT OF A SPEECH

DELIVERED AT THE

183RD ANNUAL PUBLIC MEETING

OF THE SOCIETY, HELD IN

ST. JAMES'S HALL,

On TUESDAY, JUNE 17th, 1884,

BY THE

MOST REV. THE LORD ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY,

PRESIDENT OF THE SOCIETY,

Revised by His Grace at the request of the Society.

19, DELAHAY STREET, WESTMINSTER, S.W.

S P E E C H.

I HAD hoped to give the whole of this afternoon to the Conference of a Society to which I am most deeply devoted, but I am sure I shall have your approbation if I say that I am still more due to my place in the House of Lords to consider a Bill which, I trust, will bear importantly on the Temperance of the whole kingdom—the Sunday Closing Bill for Cornwall. You will perhaps, then, allow me very briefly first to thank the Secretary for that remarkable abbreviated Report in which he flashed us round the whole world. We shall thank Lord Carnarvon for addressing us with the voice of a statesman, of one who speaks from his own observation of things, and who leaves us with strong words of encouragement, based on experience, which were well indeed taken up by the venerable Prelate whom we salute with all our hearts to-day.

There was a time when George Herbert wrote—

“Religion stands a-tiptoe on our strand
Ready to pass to the American land,”—

so full of dejection were the hearts of men at that hour. And what he looked for she did—she went, but yet she stayed; and her work, as we look across the Atlantic, is a work from which we at home can take high courage, and, in spite of past discords, may almost say to the American Church, *Matre pulchra filia pulchrior*. Speaking as President of the Society, it seems to me we have need of being helped as the presence of the Bishop of Ohio helps us, to take a calm, strong, large sight of our work. Looking upon the ever-widening and extending work of Missions, we have some fear lest, out of the

intense interest that is very rightly excited in novel parts of the work, there should arise exclusive agitations in favour of some one part of the field, tempting us to lose sight of what should be the grand aim of the Society, to keep an equable hand over all the Missions. I can never forget the wide terms of our Lord's Mission to His Apostles, *πάση τῇ κτίσει*: they were to preach the Gospel "to all the creation."

Again I feel from time to time a little anxiety lest in our ardour we should run into exaggeration. I do not find such exaggeration in the publications of this Society, but I am alluding to a handling of Missionary work which is becoming too common. The great cause of Missions will not be served by over-pathetic appeals, or by sensational writing about limited and temporary phenomena. I have only just received a letter from a Colonial Bishop lamenting the strained appeals made by friends of his own diocese, as if there were not great cause for gratitude, and as if encouragement were not more helpful than despair. Here we have again to take a strong view of the subject. There was a time in our country when every church, or at least a very great number of churches, had its special shrine and devotions; and there were pilgrimages here and there, and votaries of this intercessor or that; every man had his own pet saint; and all this preluded a period of complete breaking up. So it would be with us, I think, if we were all to throw our interests into particular Missions, as we have been a little in danger of doing, instead of taking a very strong general interest in all Missions. Spiritual competition will lead to spiritual selfishness, and while all selfishness is dangerous to the character, spiritual selfishness is perhaps the most dangerous of all, for it attacks us in that which ought to be the centre of all. The true Mission spirit is a universal spirit. True Mission work has two great characteristics. In the first place, it has the characteristic of aggressiveness, an aggressive spirit which cannot rest; but it is a self-sacrificing spirit. The spirit of Christianity is the very opposite of the spirit which has been so effective up to a certain point in Moham-medanism. Mohammedanism has been a great religion and a very aggressive religion, and it has made great sacrifices—but

all to self. It has sacrificed to itself women, peasantries, resources, nations. For a time it has prospered; but when it has eaten up all these, then it must stop and must die. The spirit of Christianity is to sacrifice self to every one of those things which Mohammedanism has sacrificed to itself. The second characteristic of Christianity is tolerance—the tolerance of love, the tolerance of intelligence. When I look at the Bishop of Lahore's Manual of Moral Philosophy, and see the two first parts occupied with bringing out all that is noble and good in the Philosophies of the East and of Greece, and see that this is to lead to the third part, the true morality of Christianity, I feel that therein the real spirit of Missions is thoroughly understood, and that the history of the whole world is looked upon as the ancient Christians looked upon it—as a Preparation for the Gospel, not a thing to be despised and thrown away. As Christ Himself came in the fulness of time, so comes our teaching to those who have run through all that they can learn without Christ, and then are in the position of men who, by their great insight into the phenomena of nature, are prepared to take in the phenomena which God reveals of Himself. Aggressiveness and Tolerance together—these should be the symbols of this Society. If I may dare to use a word which is often used in a cant sense, its members and branches should take a “statesmanlike” view of the work. The word often is corrupted to mean “cold and indifferent under the show of impartiality.” But the most impartial statesman may have a real perception of and devotion to what is true. What I mean to say is, that our work ought to produce, and when it is well done it does produce, those very characters in nations which the statesman most wants to produce, but does not know how, and never will be able to produce without Christianity. Christianity, and Christianity alone, recognises the purpose of man on earth—not only of the individual soul, but of human society. Was not Las Casas a far greater statesman than the great Cardinal in Spain, when he maintained that Indians had souls like Spaniards, and that no soul of theirs cost Christ less than the most accomplished soul in Europe? He spoke of himself as

having been for this doctrine of his "cursed like Paul, stoned like Stephen, dragged from tribunal to tribunal," but in insight was he not a far greater statesman than any of his time? Let us turn to India,—and we cannot turn our eyes in that direction without bemoaning the loss the country has sustained in that holy, gentle statesman who has just passed away. He has told us in one of his lectures that he meant to give a simple report, such a report as any Roman Prætor might have sent in to Trajan or to one of the Antonines, and, speaking as a Roman Prætor, he bore his testimony that no words could describe the rise which he had seen take place in the prospects of the future of the great nations amongst whom he had lived, and he at the same time pointed out how this was the work of a few men who, with a very few grand exceptions, were of no eminence, and were of little account in their own country, but who simply went and carried to these nations the message of the Gospel. At the same time we had Gardner's Report on the Trade of Chefoo, and he told us how, without becoming Christians, whole populations were raised in tone and character, and precisely such preparations made for a coming people, a civilised, a law-abiding, honourable people, such as the statesman would fain make if he knew how. All that was done by the simple presence among the natives of Chefoo of Christian people, not always living up to their light, but still living as Christians, and showing how the very lees of Christianity are better than the new wine of heathenism. This is no new discovery. I never can forget the thrill with which I first read the words of Cyprian, in which he put his finger on the precise point. "Paulus vocandis *formandisque* gentibus missus"—"Paul sent to call and to *form* the nations." He saw that the work of Christianity, represented to him in St. Paul, was in the time to come, not only to be the calling of individual souls, but in reality the moulding of the nations.

Now will you let me say why I think that a great Society like this has claims upon us of the very broadest nature, and that we shall not be doing our duty if we do not support with all our might its great objects? It seems to me that this Society, being able to review the whole field, can focus the

questions before it in a way that no individual can do, and can see the relative importance of this or that work of the Church. It can proportion its grants accurately, and, what is most important in contrast with special societies, it can give temporary assistance, and is not bound to go on in some one particular field. Let me give you an instance. I was delighted to hear what the Secretary said about the Corea. The Corea is a very important peninsula, destined to be important to commerce, and estimated to contain 13,000,000 people. Sir Henry Parkes has just concluded with the Coreans a treaty in which he managed to get introduced as a stipulation which could not be departed from, that British subjects must have liberty to exercise their religion. More than that he could not gain. The Coreans prohibited immoral books, and the Christian Scriptures are understood by the people in that sense. There is a weak government, and a fierce people. They are very unruly, and it is quite certain that as soon as we can we must Christianise their country. The possibility of Missions there will entirely depend on the tact and wisdom with which British subjects live and exercise their religion in the country. The question has excited the greatest ardour amongst the Bishops and Churches in China, who see the attractiveness of work there on account of its difficulties and importance. Its millions of people, its natural resources, its faltering government, and its extreme hostility to Christianity, will require sagacity proportioned to the future importance of such a country. Application was made to the S.P.G., and the answer was at once returned that the Society knew the whole importance of it, and knew exactly what to lay out upon it, and it was £2,000 per annum, which they had not got. In that answer can be seen the advantage of a Society which has full means of information at its command, so as to compare one country with another, and an answer such as that is a challenge to England to find £2,000 a year for the service of the Society in this respect.

I said just now that I thought it was unfortunate to go into exaggerations, and that I had received a letter from a Bishop,

speaking with pain of the reports set afloat, with the best intentions, with respect to his diocese. They speak of floods of people streaming into the country in numbers unparalleled and in such carelessness about their faith that a minister of the Gospel can only sit down and weep. The Bishop says this is a most mischievous representation. There is no need to weep, but only to buckle ourselves to work for the future, and that now is the very moment.

While all have rejoiced in Canon Anson's noble offer of himself to go and work as a simple Missioner with a band of helpers in that vast region, it is still more noble that, though with great reluctance, he has surrendered his own cherished plan for work, and, in spite of the regret we share with him, he has placed himself trustfully in the hands of those who have assured him that he can be still more useful as a Bishop, and has placed his fund in the hands of this Society for administration. This is a recognition of the width of the view which lies before a great Society in contrast with a limited individual view.

May I now say a few words on the Mission to the ancient Nestorian Church in Assyria. These people, under the greatest difficulties, have kept up from the earliest centuries their faith, orders, sacraments, and creeds, and do not seem to retain any trace of their ancient heresy. The study of the map alone will show how great is the advantage to peaceful progress if a people placed as they are become sincerely attached to England through the English Church. There are two great agencies at work with the only object of absorbing them into themselves, while the object of the Church of England will be to strengthen, to sustain, and to keep them intact as they have been from the beginning, and to render permanent their devotion to England, for their very religion's sake. At the earnest request of my predecessor, there has been sent out, not a Missionary, but a Teacher to them, who possesses a singular gift of languages and also of dealing with such a people, and his presence has been the greatest comfort and help to the Bishops, clergy, and people. It does not rigidly fall within the province of this Society to maintain this work, but who does

not rejoice that it is able to spare a little sum of £250 a year towards it, and that the Christian Knowledge Society gives a similar sum? Two young clergymen, or National schoolmasters, are now wanted out there, and I appeal for earnest and capable men to come forward.

In conclusion, to do wrong things in the Christian name is a fearful sin against Christ, and to teach Christianity in a wrong way is a great injury to the cause of Christ; and as long as we do these things a good Government may and must find fault with us. But to do Christian things in a Christian way will never cause disquiet. We are bound to do these things to the uttermost of our power. For while we do them we are replacing man in his own place.

Even such considerations are enough to make us feel that our work is a glorious work for mankind; but it is far more—it is a work of God through us.

Let us invoke the Lord of Missions to be with us; let us put ourselves in His hands. Let us rely, not upon the power of man, but upon the loving Spirit of God; using all gifts of God to man, and showing by “demonstration of the Spirit and power” that God the Holy Ghost is with us.









