

*Dr. Lockhart*

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[FROM THE NEW ENGLANDER FOR SEPTEMBER, 1880.]

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THE  
HISTORICAL POSITION OF MODERN MISSIONS.

BY REV. N. G. CLARK.

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*Trinity Secretary A. B. C. F. M.  
Saw him at the Conference  
in 1878*



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ALL great movements affecting the welfare of mankind, sudden as may be their apparent origin, have their periods of preparation. They are never isolated phenomena, but parts of the Providential development of the human race. A sense of the utter inadequacy of this or that religion to meet the spiritual cravings of those who know no other; the manifest failure of systems of Philosophy to solve the great problems of life; the moral decadence that sooner or later attends all forms of civilization not quickened and constantly reinvigorated by new life from above, prepare the way to a just understanding of the great plan of providence and of grace which we call history.

While it becomes us to beware of hasty generalizations in judging of the great events and still more of the great movements of history, we have the highest authority for the enquiry we now propose in our Lord's indignant reproof of the wise men of his day, "Ye can discern the face of the sky, but can ye not discern the signs of the times."



By a careful observation we may find a convergence of agencies and events, preparing the way for the early establishment of the kingdom of Christ, in many respects similar to those which heralded its first promulgation.

I. As entering into the preparation for the coming of Christ, "when the fulness of time was come," the church historian is wont to dwell on the fact that for the first time in history the civilized world, then embraced in the Roman Empire, had become one in its political and commercial interests; that through the interchange of thought in consequence of the unexampled facilities for inter-communication, and through the prevalence of a common language of law and of literature, a world-wide breadth of thought and sentiment had been induced, wholly foreign to the narrowness of former days, and, that for the first time, men were become capable of conceiving of a kingdom of God that should embrace all nations.

But this preparation is more than equalled at the present day as a consequence of the commercial enterprize that brings men of every race and language into such great centers of trade as New York, London, Cairo, Calcutta, and Shanghai, and scatters the products of a common industry to the remotest portions of the globe. The firing on Fort Sumpter sent a thrill through the civilized world, started new industries in Egypt and India, and doubled the price of the scanty clothing of the wanderers on the highlands of Central Asia. The best Roman highway, linking the capitol to the remotest colony on the frontiers of civilization, is not to be compared with the railway that spans the continents, the steamer that ploughs the seas, indifferent to wind or storm; while the months required for the transmission of intelligence to the most distant lands are reduced to hours, almost to seconds. More than two-thirds of the missionaries of the American Board can be reached by telegram within twenty-four hours. The most distant nations are brought, as it were, to our very doors. Our neighbors are no longer the men of the next town or state, or, those who use a common speech, but the human race. The physical world has thus become one to a degree far beyond the conception of the first Cæsar; one too in the play of the intellectual forces that are every where awakening men from the slumber of ages, and

the stupor of a mere animal existence, to eager expectation and a generous hope of bettering their condition. The salute from a fifteen-inch gun in the harbor of Nagasaki, stirring the hearts of thoughtful Japanese to self-sacrifice, if need be, to secure for their native land material advantages symbolized by "big ships and big guns;" and the eager inquiry of Mtesa on Lake Nyanza for white men to teach his people the arts of civilized life, are but illustrations of the intellectual agencies of our modern life in securing a new and higher unity to mankind. As a means of diffusing the knowledge and the thought of the world, contrast the slow labor of Cicero's copyists with the steam presses of one of our great publishing houses.

II. The decay of the old religious faiths and the general decline of morals at the opening of the Christian era, revealing the necessity for the new and more potent forces of the gospel, have been so ably and so fully discussed by Prof. Fisher in the first seven chapters of "The Beginnings of Christianity," and by Dr. Uhlhorn in the first two chapters of his "Conflict of Christianity with Heathenism" as to leave nothing new to be said.

The old religious faiths had lost their power. The intelligence of the educated classes rejected the traditions of the past, and the entire fabric of polytheism seemed ready to crumble to the ground. The moral restraints hitherto imposed by some degree of respect for the old creeds were relaxed, and the moral sentiment left unsupported by any outward aid, gave way under the pressure of a materialistic civilization. The social and moral degradation of all classes justified the fearful picture of the Apostle Paul in the first chapter of his letter to the Christians at Rome. The forms of religion were observed rather from custom than from faith, or possibly as an attempt to satisfy the cravings of deeper spiritual necessities.

The want of faith in any one religion was relieved by the priests who were ready to accommodate worshipers by performing such rites as they should prefer. "Unbelief and superstition," observes Mommsen,\* "different hues of the same phenomenon, went hand in hand in the Roman world of that day, and there was no lack of individuals, who, in themselves,

\* Vol. iv. pp. 668, 669.



combined both, who denied the gods with Epicurus, and yet prayed and worshiped before every shrine; when a wager might be laid that the more lax a woman was the more devoutly she worshiped Isis." So Uhlhorn\* writes of the fickle Greek who at evening, in the comedy, laughed at the same gods to whom he offered sacrifices the next morning in their temples.

In the pages of the "Missionary Herald" and in letters from missionaries at different points in the heathen world, may be found many passages, descriptive of the worship and religious sentiment of Chinese, Japanese, Hindoos, and other nationalities, that might almost have been quoted from the authors just named. In China, the same priest will serve the convenience of different sects in the same temple. Japanese laugh at the religious ceremonies they are observing, rather as holiday amusements than as worship.

It would be difficult to find a better description of the position of large numbers of educated Hindoos at the present time, thousands of whom have enjoyed the advantages of high English education from which Christianity in its principles has been purposely excluded, than is given by Uhlhorn in speaking of the educated classes in the Roman Empire of the first century, "Faith in the gods of the old religions had disappeared. In its place had come sheer Atheism and Nihilism, though only, it may be, among individuals, (at least only such ventured openly to express it). The majority substituted a kind of Monotheism. They imagined something godlike above the gods, a divine first principle, or at least they had a presentment of this without clearly discerning it, and especially without being able, definitely, to distinguish it from the world. This dissolving Polytheism led naturally to Pantheism. As the many deities of the heathen were all Nature-gods, so must the one Deity, in whom these all met, be a Nature-god. Nature itself is God; and the conviction which Strabo utters as his own was doubtless that of many:—'The one highest being is that which embraces us all; which we call heaven, world, and the nature of the universe.' Doubtless there was in this Monotheism a pre-sage of the true God, a longing and reaching forth by Heathen-

\* ~~Uhlhorn~~ *Uhlhorn*, p. 47.

ism after something higher, a testimony of the soul by nature Christian, as Tertullian says. But the One was still only 'the unknown God whom ye ignorantly worship.' The heathen did not go beyond this. The Monotheism, to which they came at last, remained abstract, lifeless. The God vaguely conceived of as above the gods was no divine being who has talked with men and who can be named and supplicated. Therefore this conviction, however widely it was diffused in cultivated circles, proved, on the whole, powerless. It gained no influence over public opinion and morals. The educated who shared it did not thereby attain to any higher worship, but remained continually in suspense between this, their own better conviction, and a hypocritical (we cannot otherwise term it) participation in the official rites."\* Hundreds of this class crowded around Prof. Seelye, at Bombay, and Puna. Dissatisfied with the old faiths of India, some were seeking in the older literature of the Vedas, made accessible to them by English scholarship, a religious creed and a system of ethics, that should rival, if possible, the claims of Christianity; while others like Keshub Chunder Sen, recognizing the power of sin over the human heart, and the consequent degradation of man's spiritual nature, seem at times ready almost to accept of Christ as the Redeemer. Certainly no one has paid a higher tribute to the personal influence of Christ on the present condition of the millions of India than Chunder Sen, in his recent addresses.

Not only in purely heathen countries but in some sections of nominally Christian lands, where ritual observances and faith in the Papal hierarchy, have taken the place of the gospel, do we find singular correspondences to the religious and moral life of the ancient world. The graphic picture of the character and career of Petronious, the arbiter of taste and the special favorite at the court of Nero, finds its representatives in many centers of our high civilization and preëminently among the cultured classes of Italy and Austria; "a life without God, a life of prosperity and of most highly refined enjoyment; not coarsely material but finely cultured and art-loving, yet without any deeper meaning."†

\* *Vol. iv.* pp. 51, 52.

† Uhlhorn, p. 48.



The utter absence of all spiritual life while forms of religious worship are kept up, finds abundant illustration in the Oriental churches and among the degraded masses of the Roman Catholic church in all countries. The patroness saint of thieves, at Lyons, is only the more devoutly worshiped as her devotees are the more active and successful in their vocation. The brigands of southern Italy and of Greece, and the Mexican fanatics, whose hands have been imbrued in the blood of Protestants, during the last few years, are careful observers of the forms of worship prescribed by the church.

Somewhat parallel to this loss of true religious sentiment and devotion to forms, is the attention given to ethics as a science when religious life and character run low. The moral sentiment thus finds expression where it has ceased to control the life. The Moralists of Rome have long since found their peers in China, just as men of our day who would substitute culture for Christian life, to whom Christ crucified is foolishness, still profess to hold to "a power that makes for righteousness." The age and the people that have lost faith in things supernatural are wont to lay the greater stress on morality.

It is, however, no longer a few nations around the Mediterranean, but the unevangelized nations of the whole world, that now wait for the coming of the Lord. Heathenism is everywhere disintegrating. The absurdities and follies of its rites and superstitions are only too manifest in the light that now illumines the dark corners of the earth. The greater the intelligence the more rapid the disintegration. Time was when centuries made little difference in the social life and moral character of a heathen nation. That time has passed. Through the various agencies of our modern civilization, a new era has come, an era of change and of transition. The moral decline that must follow unless arrested by the instant and wide-spread proclamation of the gospel is something fearful to contemplate.

III. The dispersion of the Jews, their presence in all the more important cities throughout the Roman Empire, and the influence they were exerting in behalf of Monotheism, and in awakening an expectation of some great change in the religious world, find a parallel in the wide dispersion of the English race in all parts of the globe, and in the prestige gained for the civ-



ilization and the religion they represent. Men speaking the English tongue, whether British or American, have been the pioneers of the gospel and opened the way for its proclamation by commerce and by arms, not always in ways that a Christian sentiment approves, but yet really on a scale and with results which put any special preparation through the Jews of the first century quite in the back-ground. The simple fact that the millions of India, constituting a sixth part of the human race, have been brought under English law and the influences of English civilization, and the Christianity that has inspired it, is one of the great facts of modern history; one of the most remarkable instances of the over-ruling Providence of God in the interests of the kingdom of Christ. Hardly less significant is the influence of men of the English race on the destinies of the millions of South Africa and Japan. The advanced position of Protestant nations thus compels the respect and excites the admiration and the emulation of the most diverse nations of heathendom, loosens the bonds of ignorance and superstition, and prepares the way for the reception of a religion which bears such fruits.

IV. It was fitting that the Greek language should be the common language of culture throughout the Roman Empire to give just expression to the new conceptions about to be introduced, and to give them the widest diffusion. The gospel was thus brought into connection with the best thought and culture of the world; grafted into the great Indo-Germanic stock. The vast significance of this event becomes only the more manifest with the lapse of time and the fuller development of the different branches of this stock, and of the parts committed to them in the social and moral regeneration of mankind.

But whatever may be said of the Greek tongue nineteen centuries ago, of its fitness to be the bearer of the gospel message and to transmit it to after times, may be said with added emphasis of our composite English speech, not only as to its richness and power of expression but still more of its wide diffusion till it is heard in every quarter of the globe, and everywhere recognized more and more as the language of the highest civilization. The best results of the thought and experience of all ages are stored in it. The men that use it have the resources of the centuries at their command.

V. If there was a wide spread expectation throughout the heathen world at the opening of the first century that great moral changes were near at hand, and a longing for relief from the burdens that could no longer be borne, still more is this true now, not only in heathen but in Christian lands. The Arab Sheik who visited the schools and the printing press at Beirut turned away with the remark, "You are to prevail, we are passing away." In those symbols of the new civilization, he read the doom of Islam. So in India, men frankly admit the failure of their religious systems and expect their children to embrace Christianity while declining to do so themselves.

In Christian lands there is also an anticipation of change—somewhat vague and uncertain, variously interpreted, but still in the air—and a sign of the times. With some it is restlessness and dissatisfaction, with doctrinal forms and beliefs that unite more or less of human philosophy and speculation with interpretations of the Word of God. With others it is anxiety at the failure of the church to realize the true conception of the Christian life in its purity and singleness of consecration to Christ as its head, and its absorption in the selfish enjoyment of the gospel and its incidental results to the neglect of the outlying world. With others it is distrust and despair of existing agencies engaged in the work of redemption, and a looking for a second coming of Christ to set up his kingdom by the destruction of his enemies. From others we hear of the breaking up of the historic faiths of Christendom, and of a moral interregnum—which rightly interpreted means the despair of science and modern thought to solve the questions they have vainly grappled with. From this class come the pessimistic views of the world and of the drift of modern social life—a wail much like that from their compeers at the opening of the Christian era. This despair of man is God's opportunity, and prepares the way both at home and abroad for the fuller revelation of grace conditioned on the faith of the people of God.

The new interest in the study of the Scriptures, which the Revision of the English version now in progress is to aid and intensify, the discussions which as never before center about the person and work of Christ, and the wide spread interest in missionary enterprises of every name—are the beginning of a



great reaction which at once reveals the awakening consciousness of the church to a sense of the unworthiness of its position and its neglect of opportunity, and is the promise of a new era.

We have thus far considered some of the signs of the times, in singular correspondence to those which marked the preparation for the coming of our Lord upon the earth, and which may now be appealed to in evidence of the preparation for the early establishment of his kingdom; the world become one in its political and commercial interests, the world-wide breadth of sentiment capable of a world-wide religion; the decadence of old religious faiths, and the consequent wide spread moral corruption, ending in the hopelessness and despair of heathenism; a language at once receptive of the gospel and fitted to diffuse it, reinforced by all the accumulated thought and experience of the past; the dispersion of a cultured people the world over and preëminently at all the centers of influence, to be the pioneers of the missionary when not following in his train; and lastly the wide spread expectation of change in the moral world, as at once a necessity and the hope of mankind.

To these considerations converging on the present age as formerly upon that marked by the coming of Christ, may be added some that are peculiar to the age in which we live, and which help to make up the fulness of the present time.

I. First of all note the great historic changes of the last twenty-five years, revealing the Divine Hand shaping the destinies of nations and controlling events as never before in the large interest of the plan of redemption; the breaking down of the temporal power of the Papacy, the unification of Italy, the rise of Germany as a great Protestant power, the emancipation of serfs in Russia, the civil war in this country, with its fatal blow to slavery here and the world over; India, already referred to, brought under English rule and the influence of English ideas; China opened to the free proclamation of the gospel throughout its wide domain; Japan unlocking its long closed gates and welcoming and adopting western ideas with an eagerness and rapidity unparalleled in history; the political power of Islam broken under the hammer of Russia,

and, lastly, Central Africa, explored by the intrepid labors of Livingstone, Stanley and others,—events all intimately related to the progress of the kingdom of Christ, till the world is open as never before to Christian effort.

From what other point of view shall we explain the recent intervention of England at the critical moment in the affairs of the Turkish Empire; Japan closed to the world for centuries till the Pacific railway brought her into close connection with Christian New England, or the strange sight of an envoy from the "New York Herald" patiently telling the story of Christ to Mtesa on the shores of lake Nyanza?

II. As a second characteristic of the times note the widespread missionary movement, which, begun less than a century ago, and hardly attracting the notice even of the church at large till within the last thirty years, has gone on broadening and deepening till it includes all the leading evangelical denominations of Christendom, till more than fifty millions of dollars have been devoted to the circulation of the Scriptures in all the principal languages spoken among men, and till more than a hundred millions of dollars have been expended in behalf of the perishing in heathen lands who can make no return but their grateful love; till five thousand devoted men and women educated in the best learning of the day, are bearing the seeds of Christian civilization around the world. They are scattered through the Turkish Empire, and among the millions of India; they are found in the open ports of China, and threading their way up its great rivers; their words find crowds of eager listeners in the new world of Japan; they brave the fevers of the Gold Coast, and from the Cape of Good Hope are planning conquests in the interior of Africa; songs of praise from hundreds of islands in the Pacific attest their presence; and they risk their lives at the hands of fanatics in papal lands that they may make known the simple story of the cross. Half a million of souls won to Christ, and a Christian community of nearly two millions who have come out of the darkness and the superstition of centuries, often at the loss of all things, are tokens of the divine blessing on their labors; till the progress of modern missions, in the last seventy years, exceeds that of the first seventy of the apostolic age.



As merely one feature of modern missionary enterprise, note the uprising of the Christian women of our land and the marvelous record of the last twelve years, since a few earnest Christian women, in Boston, in faith and prayer organized the Woman's Board of Missions on a plan so wise and judicious as to secure early adoption by other denominations as well, till its influence is felt from the Aroostook to the Golden Gate, bringing the Christian women of the land to a consciousness of their power and privilege, into sympathy with each other and to united efforts for the social and moral elevation of woman the world over.

III. But of still greater significance than the record of numbers won to the truth is the demonstration given to the world of the developing power of the gospel. It has been left to this nineteenth century, to this period of intensest material progress, of strife for wealth, and the consequence it gives, and too often for the mere animal pleasures it places within the reach of its possessors,—it has been left to this century, and to the missionary enterprise, to give proof amid men of every race and clime, of that quickening energy which provides at once the impulse and the sustaining force of all true intellectual activity and of all high culture, to illustrate the possible greatness and glory of every human soul, to vindicate the wisdom and the glory of God in its redemption.

Our civilization has been the slow growth of ages, and we are prone to judge from our experience that ages will be required for the development of a similar civilization in heathen lands. The incidental refinements, the usages and the forms of cultivated social life, are of comparatively slow growth; they belong to the lower realms of the physical and intellectual world; but the development of a spiritual manhood and womanhood, through the quickening energy of the gospel and the new life forces from the inbreathing of the Divine Spirit, is quite another thing. Add to this the fact that the gospel is now reinforced by all the motive agencies of our modern culture at the command of the missionary, and we have abundant reason to anticipate the more rapid development of the missionary work in heathen lands. Men born of heathen parents are now eloquent preachers, teachers in colleges and seminaries, writers of

books, editors of newspapers, and in less than a single generation are putting themselves upon a plane of equality, in intellectual and moral character, with members of our own favored race.

A few years since, admiring crowds in Edinburgh listened to the eloquence of a Zulu Caffre, brought up in mission schools—the heathen boy developed into the Christian man. At the conference of Allahabad, in India, of the one hundred and eighteen delegates, representing nearly all the Christian bodies at work for the evangelization of that country, twenty were native Hindoos of different castes and of different languages, graduates of mission schools and seminaries, sitting side by side with graduates of English Cambridge and Oxford, and American Amherst, Williams, and Yale, as their peers, and vindicating their character by the papers they presented on mission topics, and by the discussions in which they took part.

It may be said that these are exceptions; and so are the great men, always, who represent the nation to which they belong and give it its character before the world. They are the flower of the people, some doubter may say; but as President Eliot recently remarked to such a criticism upon his praise of the young men who go forth, year by year, from the halls of Harvard, "True, but it is their flower which characterizes a people, and contains the seeds of their future."

These facts show the power of the gospel to bring men up from their lowest degradation to the high plane of Christian manhood in a single generation.

IV. As the result of the present missionary movement it should not be overlooked that Christianity has now become naturalized everywhere among the most diverse nations. It has proved itself to be the power of God unto salvation of every one that believeth, be he Jew or Gentile, Hindoo, Chinese, or African, or dweller on the islands of the sea. The same results are witnessed everywhere, in the changed lives, the new hopes and aspirations, the trustful faith, the single-hearted devotion, the patience under trial and persecution, the vilest and most degraded washed and made clean in the blood of Christ, Christian homes set up, Christian institutions established and sustained, and self-sacrificing efforts to make others sharers with them in the blessings of the gospel.



It is sometimes said that the lower forms of religion that have prevailed in the world have been suited to the lower forms of social life and culture. It were wiser to say that the lower forms of social life and culture have been such as were possible to existing forms of religion. Carlyle has somewhere remarked for substance, "tell me what a man's religion is, not what he professes to believe, but what he actually believes and lives up to, and I will tell you what he is. So of the nation. Tell me what its religion is and I will tell you its history." The most vital element in its character is its religion. It is now no longer a question of ten great religions in the world—each suited to a certain stage of culture—but it is a question of one religion for mankind, one suited to the spiritual necessities and the best development of the race. The Confucianist, in the presence of three hundred living churches of Chinese, can no longer say that Christianity is not for China. The Buddhist in Japan finds his argument sadly embarrassed by the rapid growth of Christian churches, and of a new moral sentiment, and by the marvellous development of intellectual and material progress from contact with Christian nations; and the Brahman is still more embarrassed as he finds Christian men and women speaking more than twenty different languages, scattered through six thousand villages and cities between the Himalayas and Cape Comorin, professing and illustrating a new life through faith in the Christ as their Redeemer. So everywhere Christianity is naturalized and demonstrates its character as the one religion for the human race.

V. Another very timely aid and encouragement in the work of evangelization, may be found in the results of investigations into the various religious systems of the world. Whatever may have been the motives of many who have favored us with their researches, whether of envy, of strife, or of good will; whether or not we care to accept the term "Science of Religion," in the sense originally contemplated, as suggestive of a clearing up of all systems of faith from a natural basis, independently of any revelation from above, we cannot but rejoice in the work actually done, just as we are grateful to the miners for the weary toil that secures for us the precious metals that enter into the exchanges of the world.

It is much to have traced the efforts of different races to retain the primal conceptions of God and of immortality amid the most adverse influences of ignorance and superstition, and the adverse tendencies of the natural heart, or, if you please, to arrive at these higher conceptions from primal instincts inlaid in the very structure of the human soul; to see how the conceptions of one nation have been modified by contact with those of another, or reconstructed to meet necessities never satisfied, all revealing the spiritual nature of man and the possibilities of development and culture, the whole spiritual creation groaning in bondage and waiting for redemption, waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God. These problems were to be worked out in the interest of the gospel.

As confirming the argument by the highest authority in this department of knowledge, may be cited the following passage from the third Lecture of Max Müller on the Science of Religion:

"I wish to call back to your recollection the fact that in exploring together the ancient archives of language, we found that the highest god had received the same name in the ancient mythology of India, Greece, Italy and Germany, and had retained that name whether worshiped on the Himalayan mountains, or among the oaks of Dodona, on the Capitol, or in the forests of Germany. I pointed out that his name was *Dyaus* in Sanskrit, *Zeus* in Greek, *Jovis* in Latin, *Tiu* in German; but I hardly dwelt with sufficient strength on the startling nature of this discovery. These names are not mere names; they are historical facts, aye, facts more immediate, more trustworthy, than many facts of mediæval history. These words are not mere words, but, they being before us, with all the vividness of an event which we witnessed ourselves but yesterday, the ancestors of the whole Aryan race, thousands of years it may be, before Homer and the Veda, worshiping an unseen Being, under the self-same name, the best, the most exalted name, they could find in their vocabulary, under the name of Light and Sky. And let us not turn away, and say that this was after all but nature worship and idolatry. No, it was not meant for that, though it may have been degraded into that in later times; *Dyaus* did not mean the blue sky, nor was it simply the



sky personified; it was meant for something else. We have in the Veda the invocation *Dyaus pitar*, the Greek *Zeũ πατέρ*, the Latin *Jupiter*, and that means in all the three languages what it meant before these three languages were torn asunder—it means Heaven-Father! These two words are not mere words; they are, to my mind, the oldest poem, the oldest prayer of mankind, or at least of that pure branch of it to which we belong, and I am as firmly convinced that this prayer was uttered, that this name was given to the unknown God before Sanskrit was Sanskrit and Greek was Greek, as, when I see the Lord's Prayer in the languages of Polynesia and Melanesia, I feel certain that it was first uttered in the language of Jerusalem. We little thought when we heard for the first time the name of Jupiter, degraded it may be by Homer or Ovid into a scolding husband or a faithless lover, what sacred records lay enshrined in this unholy name. We shall have to learn the same lessons again and again in the Science of Religion, namely, that the place whereon we stand is holy ground. Thousands of years have passed since the Aryan nations separated to travel to the North and the South, the West and the East; they have each formed their languages, they have each founded empires and philosophies, they have each built temples and razed them to the ground; they have all grown older, and it may be wiser and better; but when they search for a name for what is most exalted and yet most dear to every one of us; when they wish to express both awe and love, the infinite and the finite, they can but do what their old fathers did when gazing up to the eternal sky, and feeling the presence of a Being as far as far, and as near as near can be; they can but combine the self-same words and utter once more the primeval Aryan prayer, Heaven-Father, in that form which will endure forever—"Our Father which art in Heaven."

By such inquiries Christianity is seen to be something not foreign to the human mind. There has been a development of religious systems—the expressions of man's moral and religious nature among the different races, in some measure correspondent to the development of the chosen people in preparation to receive the gospel. Christianity joins on to and supplements whatever is best and worthiest in all—the culmination

of all, as man is the culmination of the animal kingdom. It is in its favor that many of its doctrines are found in other systems, its moral code only the higher and more complete. As the last result of investigation may we not agree with one of the last published utterances of the distinguished author just quoted :

"Nothing would more effectually secure to the pure and simple teaching of Christ its true place in the historical development of the human mind than to place it side by side with the other religions of the world." "Nowhere would these two books"—the Old and the New Testament—"have had a grander setting or have shone with a brighter light than surrounded by the Veda, the Zendavesta, the Buddhist Tripitaka, and the Koran."\*

VI. Still another result of the missionary enterprise abroad, which no figures can measure and yet of vast moment in its bearing on the moral regeneration of the unevangelized nations of the world, is the regeneration of their language through the S/ labors of missionaries.

The corruption of the heathen world, the falling away from the primal conceptions of a Divine Being, and the simpler, hardier virtues of earlier times—till having changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds and four-footed beasts and creeping things, they were given over to uncleanness and vile affections, are faithfully represented in the corruption of language till the very possibility of expressing spiritual truths and the moral virtues is well nigh lost. The fit words for moral and religious ideas have either died out or been degraded to base uses till their original purport has been lost. It has been remarked of the Egyptians that through the devotion of the nation for centuries to commerce and trade their language became reduced to less than seven thousand words, and those fitted to their occupation. Thus the nation seemed doomed to the degradation that follows such absorption in merely sensuous ends and objects. The languages spoken by savage and barbarous tribes are but the shattered fragments or the decayed remnants of a once noble speech. The meagre and impure

\* *Contemporary Review*, Nov. 1879, p. 385.



language of the Sepoy is all that remains of the rich and powerful idiom of the poets of the Veda. The seclusion in which women are kept in the East has a reason in the moral atmosphere to which they would be exposed. The missionary often feels compelled to keep his children strictly within the limits of the compound, as the house and grounds he occupies are called, to save them from the corrupting speech with which the air is filled.

If on the other hand a high degree of intellectual culture is realized as in the classical nations of antiquity, and in such nations in our day as China and Japan, the language is developed in corresponding lines, but not in the direction of the highest spiritual conceptions. The language of the masses only gains in the vocabulary of corruption and of debasement.

The service rendered to the different nations of the heathen world by missionaries in the revival and enriching of their language is thus beyond all estimate. The essential elements of progress are supplied. Native scholars do not hesitate to say of many of the missionaries that they speak their language better than the natives themselves. Add to this the sloughing off of old errors of thought and vices of life, and the introduction of new and elevating ideas, and the work of the missionary is seen in its wide relations to the life and development of the millions among whom he labors. A pure language is a necessity of the highest culture. One of the promises of God to his covenant people\* is, "I will turn to the people a pure language that they may call upon the name of the Lord to serve Him with one consent." We are wont to speak of the obligations of our language and literature to our English version of the Scriptures; the Germans recognize equal indebtedness to Luther: how much greater the service rendered to the heathen nations by the men who give them not only the Scriptures but for the first time a pure and elevating literature. It is only as we consider the extent to which the ideas of Christianity have leavened the thought and sentiment of Christendom; its literature, its social and political institutions, making up the intellectual and moral atmosphere in which we live, that we can estimate the work now being done by missionaries among the

\* Zeph. iii. 9.

millions of the heathen world, and its bearing on the world's evangelization.

In addition therefore, to the singular correspondences of our age to that in which the church received its commission to evangelize all nations, we find now a special preparation for the early and complete evangelization of the world, in the Providences of our history; in the wide-spread missionary movement that already reaches all the principal nations and tribes of mankind; in the demonstration now given of the developing power of the gospel, its acknowledged superiority to all other systems of religion, and its fitness to become the one religion of the race; and lastly in the regeneration begun and now going forward of the languages of the heathen world—all constituting the immense vantage ground of the Christian church of to-day—signs of the times, beckoning her forward to the final victory.

In the Providence of God we have entered on what promises to be the last stage in the world's evangelization if we have but faith to improve the great opportunity. We are in the heart of a grand movement, that for the first time in human history compasses the globe. Great events thicken. The vast systems of error and superstition that have so long weighed upon the race are undermined and ready to fall, as Christlieb remarked recently in his address at Basle before the Evangelical Alliance, "the progress will be the more rapid as we near the end." The night is far spent; the day is at hand. The Spirit and the Bride say, come; and let him that heareth say, come.