

Christianity the Ultimate and Universal Religion of Man.

A SERMON

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BY THE

REV. LEROY J. HALSEY, D. D.,
CHICAGO, ILL.

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CHRISTIANITY,
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“THEN opened He their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures, and said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.”—LUKE xxiv : 45-47.

WE live in the age of Missions. We are called to take part in a grand aggressive movement, which the Church of God is making for the conversion of the world. The revival of the missionary spirit, and the organization of this movement, may be said to date from the opening of the present century. There are, indeed, other prominent characteristics by which this Nineteenth Century will be known and remembered in history. It is the age of the advancement of science. It is the age of discovery, invention, and every useful art—the age of the telegraph, the railroad, the steam-ship, and the steam-press. It is the age of the wide diffusion of intelligence among the masses of mankind. It is the age of commerce, and intercommunication between the nations of the earth. But, above all, it is the age of earnest, concerted, and persevering efforts to carry the Gospel beyond the boundaries of Christendom by missions to the heathen. As distinguished from every other age since the Apostolic, it may be called the *Sæculum Evangelicum*. This is its most marked distinction. This is its highest and most enduring glory. By

this it will doubtless be rendered memorable in the annals of the future.

If we ask for the divine warrant on which the Church is acting in this great endeavor to evangelize and Christianize the whole human race, we shall find it in all the Scriptures, but especially in that inspired record which sets before us the wonderful history of Christ himself. Nothing can be more striking than the world-wide character of His Gospel as announced both in the opening and the closing pages of that history. It opens at His nativity, with a voice from Heaven and the song of angels, "Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men." It closes also with a voice of angels, announcing his second coming, and with the promise of the Saviour about to ascend to Heaven, saying, "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. But ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you; and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."

During the forty days preceding his ascension, he delivered to his apostles the great commission, "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature;" or, as it is given by another evangelist, "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." In perfect harmony with these passages are the words of our text, uttered in the hearing of His apostles on the evening of the day in which he rose from the dead. Referring to the things written in the law of Moses, in the Prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning Himself, and opening their minds to receive the truth,

he said, "Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name, among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem."

Here, then, in the inspired history of the Son of God, at his incarnation, at his resurrection, and in the hour of his ascension, we find the direct and authoritative warrant for all that his people are now doing, and all that they have ever done, for the conquest of the world. Here are the marching orders of the Church militant. Here is the high commission of the ministry, and all the office-bearers of Christ's army. Here is the grand design for which they are called of God and sent into the field. Here is the glorious object for which they are to labor on together to the end of time—the proclamation of the Gospel to every creature, the conversion of all nations to Christ, the triumph of his kingdom over all the earth. For this he became incarnate. For this he suffered and died. For this he rose again, and ascended to heaven. Thus was it written in all the Scriptures, and thus it became necessary for him to suffer, rise from the dead, and ascend to heaven, to the end that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name, among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. The work is as wide as the world; the commission is to the end of time.

The expression here employed, "repentance and remission of sins," is a brief summary of the whole Gospel. Without the shedding of blood there is no remission. Without the atoning blood of Christ, as the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world, no forgiveness of sins, and no repentance acceptable to God could ever have been preached; no gospel of glad tidings could ever have been offered to man. To preach repentance and remission of sins is to preach what Paul preached at Athens, "Jesus and the resurrection," and at Corinth, "Christ and him crucified." It is to preach the whole doctrine of the cross. It is to preach salvation—the only salvation possible to man. To preach repentance and

remission of sins in his name is to preach Christianity. For Christianity is Christ. There is no Christianity for the soul without Christ, the power of God, and the wisdom of God.

This standing order of the Saviour, given to his Church on the solemn and impressive occasion of his own departure to heaven, remains in all its sacred and binding force. It is the law of his kingdom, operating through all the ages, upon every minister, and elder, and member of his Church. The high injunction to his Apostles was to tarry at Jerusalem until they were endowed with power from on high by the descent of the Holy Ghost, and then to go forth to the ends of the earth. There must be a beginning at Jerusalem; but there should be no end, except with the end of the world. The central point of their departure was the Holy City; but there should be no limits to their progress, except with the wide circuit of the earth. The work commencing in that first Christian century, and on that sacred soil, trodden by the feet of prophets and apostles, should never more cease till every creature had heard the glad tidings, and all the tribes and nations of our race had been conquered by the cross; till the story of Immanuel had been told in every language, in every clime, on every continent and island, in every human habitation.

Without attempting to unfold all the important truths contained in this passage, let us take, as a theme appropriate to the present occasion, that which seems to be its great underlying thought; namely—that the Gospel of Christ is the Ultimate and Universal Religion of Man, and that, as such, it must be preached to all nations.

The proposition, as thus propounded, is twofold; it contains both a doctrine and a duty; a statement of fact, and a lesson of obligation. The one is the inevitable sequence of the other. If, by divine appointment, Christianity is the ultimate and universal religion of man, then it ought to be preached, and it will be preached, to all nations. Thrown into syllogistic form, the argument may

be stated thus : The ultimate and universal religion ought to be preached, and will be preached, to all nations. But Christianity is the ultimate and universal religion. Christianity, therefore, must and will be preached to all nations. If the premises be true, all must concede the conclusion. The major premise none can doubt. Let us then take up the second or middle term, that Christianity is the ultimate and universal religion of man. On this point we need a deeper conviction and a stronger faith. The church needs to see with a clearer vision, and to feel with a higher assurance, that Christianity is the true, the last, and the only remedy for our ruined race.

Here, then, let us build an argument to strengthen faith, to encourage hope, to quicken zeal, and to stimulate exertion, in the grand work to which the Church of these latter days has addressed herself, of carrying the Gospel of Christ to all the nations of the earth. Let us show, if we can, that Christianity is the only religion known to man, which possesses all the attributes and elements of supremacy, of universality, of duration, of success and final victory ; and that the Church is justified in all the sacrifices of time and toil, life and treasure, she is making for its diffusion.

I. The first argument that may be adduced, in favor of Christianity, as the ultimate and universal religion for man, is derived from its origin. It is the religion of God. It is not a thing of man's devising. It begins with the creation and fall of our race. It dates back even from the counsels of eternity. Coming down through all the dispensations of the Jewish Church, gradually unfolded in the Scriptures of the Old Testament, and fully inaugurated by Christ and his Apostles in the New, it is not only the most ancient, but the only divine religion which has ever existed on earth. Being the first, it must be the last. Being the first, it must be of God ; and being of God, it can never perish. It comes with the claim of a

celestial birthright. It already wears the crown of nearly sixty centuries.

Christianity challenges the belief of all mankind, on the ground of evidence both human and divine. In vindication of its claim, it appeals directly to every high and noble faculty of the human soul. Discarding every resort to passion, prejudice, superstition, brute force, and military power, it courts the keenest and closest scrutiny of enlightened reason. Renouncing every artifice of ignorance or ambition, it stands ready to make good its claim to divinity at the bar of the highest intelligence of our race. A thousand times has it encountered the assaults of infidelity; and a thousand times has it stood fast. Of no other religion on earth can this be affirmed. Appealing only to the true, the beautiful, and the good; and planting itself on the ground of reason and conscience, it has, in every age and every land, demonstrated its claim to a celestial origin.

Divine in its Author, Christianity is also divine in its aims. It comes from God, and tends to God. It seeks to raise our ruined nature to the skies. Its highest end is the glory of God; and its grand design is to elevate man, and prepare him for the enjoyment of that glory. It comes into a world of sin and rebellion. It comes to a race at war with God, and at war with itself. It finds human nature a tiger, and aims to transform it into a lamb. To a world in arms it brings the gospel of peace; and strives to reconcile man to his brother-man, by first reconciling him to his God.

The whole conception of Christianity, as revealed in the Bible, from first to last, is that of a divine remedy for sin, and death, and woe.

It is a perfect system of saving truth, emanating from God our Maker, Redeemer, and Sanctifier—a system of facts, doctrines, precepts, promises, penalties, means, agencies, and influences, all given for the express purpose of raising us from ruin, and fitting us for an immortality of blessedness and glory in the heavens.

Revealing a pure spiritual God, and a pure spiritual heaven, it requires a pure spiritual worship. It seeks to make man happy, by making him holy ; and to make him holy, by making him like his God. And it accomplishes its ends, not by fleets and armies, not by human might or power, not by the thunder of artillery, or the lightning of any earthly sword ; but by the sword of the Spirit, and the truth of God. It conquers by moral and spiritual power, or not at all. The weapons of its warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds.

Is there any intelligent man, who can read the Bible, and fail to see, that this is the true ideal and end of Christianity, as a remedial system? And is there any candid student of history, who will deny, that from the hour, when this gospel was completed on the Cross, and went forth from Jerusalem to be preached to the Gentile nations, it has everywhere vindicated itself as the religion of heaven? In the face of the most formidable opposition that was ever arrayed against any cause, has it not won the profound and admiring homage of millions of mankind, including many of the most powerful and brilliant thinkers that have adorned the annals of civilized history ?

What other religious system, then, ancient or modern, can dispute with Christianity the claim to a Divine origin? Of all the religions in the world, where is the competitor? Shall the sensual and war-clad religion of the Koran, or the old and effete systems of China and India, be placed in the balances against the Gospel? To name them in this connection, would be as absurd, as to call back the exploded idolatries of the old pagan nations, whose lords many, and gods many, are buried in the dust of ages. Of all the religions now in the world, it may be as truly said, as of those which are dead and gone, that Christianity is without a rival. Of Divine religions, there is but one. It is the first ; and it is destined to be the last. It extends back to the gates of Paradise Lost, and forward to those of Paradise Regained.

We need not press the point; but every intelligent and candid mind must feel the force of the argument, that the only Divine religion ought to be preached, and will yet be preached to the whole family of man.

II. The next reason we offer, in proof of the proposition, that Christianity is to be the final and universal religion, is found in its perfect adaptation to human nature. It is the only religion ever preached on earth, which is adequate to all the necessities of our condition as lost and guilty sinners; to give us peace of conscience towards God, and a good hope of eternal life beyond the grave. It is suited alike to every clime and nation, and to every condition in which men are found, from the heights of hereditary power to the extremest depths of poverty and wretchedness. The air we breathe, the sunshine and the rain from heaven, and the food which sustains our mortal existence, are not more perfectly adapted to their end, than the gospel of Christ is adapted to the soul.

Having God for its author, truth for its basis, salvation for its end, and the crown of life as its reward, this is the only religious system ever propounded, which is at once worthy of the acceptance of all mankind, and suited to their wants and woes, hopes and aspirations, as dying, yet immortal beings. It is the only religion of well-grounded faith, of perfect love, of soul-cheering hope, of universal peace, of self-denying virtue. It is the only religion of reconciliation and atonement. It proclaims the absolute fatherhood of God, and the unbroken brotherhood of man, teaching that all men are the "offspring of God, who hath made of one blood all nations of men to dwell on all the face of the earth."

It provides and offers a salvation, ample as the wants of the world, and competent to heal the maladies of every soul that will receive it. Coming with the price of an infinite sacrifice, even the blood of the Son of God, to remove the guilt of sin, and with the potential influence of the Spirit of God, to wash away the pollution of sin, it does

for man what nothing else has ever done or can do—lays a foundation for his faith in God, raises him up from the degradation of sin, transforms his character into the likeness of Christ, and inspires his heart as by the power of an endless life. It is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

This world-wide adaptation of the gospel of Christ distinguishes it from every other religious system. It is as wide and unrestricted, in its offers of grace and mercy, as have been the ravages of sin and death. Wherever sin and death have gone, there may the gospel go; there is the gospel needed. Its invitation is, "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely. Ho! every one that thirsteth: come ye to the waters. Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else."

The one blood of the Cross is offered to all, and adapted to all in whose veins flows the one blood of creation, That blood is as adequate for the redemption of the whole race, as for the redemption of a single soul. It is wonderful to observe, how the unities cluster around the cross of Christ—one God and Father of all, one Mediator, one dying race, one offering for sin, one Divine Spirit, one faith, one baptism, one Gospel, one Church, one common salvation, and one eternal heaven. There is but one Bible, and but one religion made for man.

In this respect Christianity stands forth in solitary and unapproachable grandeur. All other religions have been local and national, without even the conception of a universal extension. All others have risen, flourished, and decayed within their narrow domains, except only as they have been propagated by immigration, or the sword. None but Christianity has ever sent its missionaries across the seas, and its evangelists to the ends of the earth. It has been reserved for the Gospel, to grasp the idea of one faith for all nations, and to teach that its field is the world, and its home the heart of every human being.

Its mission is alike to the Jew and the Gentile, to the wise and the unwise, to the lonely islanders of the ocean, and to the teeming millions of the continent; for here, in the words of an apostle, "there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free; but Christ is all, and in all." Can any man, then, deny the conclusion, that this Divine Gospel, so full in its provisions, so free in its offer, and so adapted to human nature, shall be preached to all nations as the ultimate and universal religion?

III. Another consideration, which may be offered, in support of our main proposition, is drawn from the prophecies of the Old Testament Scriptures. It is there clearly and repeatedly predicted, that the Gospel of Christ should finally triumph over all opposition, and become the accepted belief of all mankind. From the first promise of a Saviour in Eden, down to his advent, this forms one of the most fruitful themes of prophetic inspiration. The coming of Immanuel in the flesh, and with it, the establishment of his kingdom over the nations; the preaching of his Gospel to the ends of the earth, and the ushering in of the latter-day glory of the Church, "when the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea," may be said to constitute the grand burden of Old Testament prediction.

Through all the Prophets, and all the Psalms, and presented in the glowing imagery of Hebrew poetry, stands forth the sublime conception of a universal religion of holiness and truth, and a universal kingdom of righteousness and peace, which should break over every opposing barrier of error and superstition, and bring every knee to bow, and every tongue to confess, that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. This is the golden age of glory, when all shall know the Lord, from the least to the greatest; when all flesh shall see his salvation; when all nations shall walk in the light of his countenance; when the tabernacle of God shall be with men; when the lion

and the lamb shall lie down together; and there shall be nothing to hurt or destroy, in all his holy mountain.

This magnificent conception, which runs with increasing clearness through all the Scriptures, is found in the very first promise which God gave to Abraham, when he established with him, as the Father of the Faithful, his everlasting covenant, and spoke of the Messiah to come, saying, "In thee and in thy seed, shall all the families of the earth be blessed."

This conception of a final and all-conquering kingdom, fills the mind of the inspired Psalmist, when describing that Messiah's reign, he says, "Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree: the Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my son; this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession."

From the glowing pages of Isaiah, whole chapters might be quoted, in illustration of the same great truth. "It shall come to pass in the last days," says he, "that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people, and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more."

To this may be added another passage from the same evangelical prophet, describing the final triumph of the Gospel, and the millennial glory of the Church. "Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the Lord shall

arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising. Lift up thine eyes round about, and see: all they gather themselves together, they come to thee: thy sons shall come from far, and thy daughters shall be nursed at thy side. Then thou shalt see, and flow together, and thine heart shall fear, and be enlarged; because the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee, the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee."

In harmony with these glowing descriptions, we have the word of the Lord by Malachi, who closes the long line of Old Testament prophecy: "From the rising of the sun, even unto the going down of the same, my name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name, and a pure offering; for my name shall be great among the heathen, saith the Lord of hosts."

Now, can we for a moment doubt, that a religion, whose final triumph was thus distinctly foretold, and described, under the inspiration of God, two thousand, and even three thousand years ago, shall ye fulfil its grand destiny, and realize this glorious conception of complete and universal dominion? Then, how great is the obligation, how urgent the duty, how strong the encouragement, to the Church, to preach it to all nations.

IV. But we must now add another element to our argument, closely allied to the one just stated. It is, that the great Founder, Christ himself, distinctly contemplated Christianity, as the last and triumphant religion. Of this, our text, and the parallel passages, furnish abundant proof. Of this, his solemn charge, to preach it to all nations, is an ample demonstration.

He predicted, that it should begin at Jerusalem, embrace all nations, and continue to the end of the world. He, who was greater than all the prophets, said, that he would build his church upon himself, the Rock of Ages, and that the gates of hell should not prevail against it.

Of all the thoughts he uttered while upon earth, none was more clearly stated, than that his kingdom was as wide as the world, and should outlast the world—that it should subdue all other kingdoms, and be transferred to the new heavens, and the new earth.

With unerring vision, he foresaw the end from the beginning, and predicted the result. He saw of the travail of his soul, and was satisfied. He knew what was in man, and he knew what should be in the world. He came to suffer, to die, and to conquer. He saw Satan fall, as lightning from heaven, and his kingdom demolished. He looked through suffering and death, through the cross and the sepulcher, to the crown of final triumph. He foresaw his gospel carried to the ends of the earth, and nations born in a day. Having laid the foundations of his empire, in suffering, as our great High Priest, he ascended to his mediatorial throne as our exalted King, to reign and rule, till all enemies are put under his feet.

On one occasion, in view of his approaching crucifixion, he said, “And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me.” On another occasion, speaking of the great things which should fill up the interval between his first and second coming, he said, “And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.” Thus, during his public ministry, after his resurrection, and as he ascended to heaven, he comprehended in one view the whole course of time, and declared, that his gospel should be preached to all nations, even to the end of the world. As a Priest he had died for it, as a Prophet he had foretold it, as a King he ascended to heaven to accomplish it. This was a part of the Divine plan; this was the result of his own Divine mission, “that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name, among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.”

So the Apostle Paul views it, in that remarkable passage, in which he speaks of the preaching of the Gospel to the Gentiles, as one of the wonders of redemption. “And

without controversy great is the mystery of Godliness; God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.”

Thus the Divine Founder of Christianity, having finished on the cross, what had been written of him, in Moses, and the Prophets, and the Psalms, and having inaugurated his church and ministry under a final dispensation, gives them this last great command, “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth, and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned.” Never was any parting charge more comprehensive in its range, more authoritative in its tone, more binding in its obligations, more solemn and momentous in its issues.

It was the beginning of the end so long contemplated. It was the actual setting up of that spiritual kingdom, which was not of this world; and was to break in pieces every opposing kingdom of the world. This great and comprehensive command, embracing all nations, and all time in its mighty sweep, is itself a demonstration that the author of Christianity was Divine; and that in his death, his resurrection, and his ascension to heaven, he accomplished a work, which, in the grandeur of its conception, the permanency of its results, and the benefits it secures, places him upon an elevation, unapproached and unapproachable, by all the achievements of the sages, philosophers, and heroes of this world. Where is the religious system that has ever issued a command like this, inaugurated a philanthropy like this, developed and put into execution a conception like this—a gospel breathing peace on earth, and good will to all men, committed by its great Author to his people, with the injunction to preach it to all nations, and with the promise, that he will be with them, to the end of the world? Do we need any higher demonstration than is furnished by this command, that the Gospel of Christ must go on conquering, and to conquer, until it shall win a final and universal dominion, and the

prayer of all ages, Thy kingdom come, shall be answered?

V. And yet another link may be added to this chain. It is the demonstration of history. It is the logic of events—the great events, that have marked the progress and triumph of eighteen centuries. Christianity has already done enough to prove that it can do all that remains. It has erected its standards, and won its trophies all along the ages which are past. Human nature is the same in every era, and every land; and the future is in no sense more difficult than the past.

There are no fiercer foes for the Gospel yet to meet, than it has already met. There are no harder battles yet to fight, than it has already fought. There are no costlier conquests yet to win, than it has already won on a thousand fields. The religious system, which could withstand the fierce fanaticism of the Jewish race, which could conquer the brilliant philosophy and mythology of classic Greece, which could face the ten fiery persecutions of Roman power, which could meet and vanquish the bloody barbarians of Central and Northern Europe, need not shrink from any encounter it may have to make with the hoary idolatries of the present pagan world.

Our argument for Christianity, as thus far presented, based upon its Divine origin, its adaptation to human nature, the prophecies of the Old Testament, and the command of its great Founder, would have been complete and satisfactory at the opening of the Apostolic age, even before a single preacher had gone forth from Jerusalem, or a single convert had been won from the Gentile world.

If, therefore, we had no history of the past, the duty of the Church would be clear and urgent, even as it was at the beginning, to carry the gospel to the heathen. But if the argument would be conclusive and satisfactory in that case, much more is it now. What excuse is there for unbelief and delay, after this added demonstration of eighteen centuries? If the apostles were now in the world, seeing

what we see, and knowing what we know, of the wonderful things which God has wrought, and of the wonderful progress which the Gospel is making in every part of the world, where it has been preached, what would they think of our indecision and delay?

To feel the full force of this argument from history, for the final and universal prevalence of the gospel, let us briefly recur to the three great periods of its triumph.

The first, is that of the primitive church, commencing with the labors of the apostles, and culminating in the conversion of Constantine. Can any demonstration be more signal and complete, for the gospel, as the mighty power of God, than its successful progress during the first three centuries? It was the first grand missionary movement, furnishing a divine model for all subsequent ages. Beginning at Jerusalem, according to Christ's great command, the gospel went forth from city to city, from land to land, until, in three centuries, it had swept the circuit of all the nations surrounding the Mediterranean, penetrated to the utmost limits of the Roman world, and become the prevailing religion of the empire.

With no power, but that of truth, of love and of God, it had won its way over the combined unbelief and opposition of the three great races, which had so long held the mastery of the world, and embodied the civilization of antiquity. It had been preached in the three languages inscribed upon the cross of the dying Son of God—the Hebrew, Greek and Latin; and it had met and conquered, on their own arena, the Jew, the Greek and the Roman. It had been preached in all the tongues spoken on the day of Pentecost; and it had proclaimed the truth, as it is in Jesus, to Barbarians, Scythians, bond and free, in their remotest borders.

In all history, has there ever been a more difficult achievement, or a grander triumph? Is there any thing, in the Paganism of our day, harder to overcome, than the prejudice of the Jew, the philosophy of the Greek, the pride of the Roman, and the ferocity of the ancient Bar-

barian? Is there any thing, in the superstitions of the African, in the learned traditions of the Hindoo, in the boasting philosophy of the Chinese, in the savage wildness of the American Indian, and in the fanatical zeal of the Mohammedan, more formidable than that which the Gospel vanquished in its first great conflict with the religious systems of antiquity?

The second period of progress and triumph, is that which extends from Constantine down through the Middle Ages; during which the Gospel subdued and reclaimed the warlike and bloody idolaters of all Central and Northern Europe. The earth has probably never been trodden by tribes and races, more fierce and intractable, than those which once peopled Europe, overthrew the Roman Empire, and became the founders of the present European nations.

But what are they now? The most enlightened, powerful and highly civilized portion of the globe. And what has civilized them? The Gospel of Jesus Christ. By what instrumentality were they converted to Christ? By the preaching of the Cross; by missions to the heathen. They were once all heathens, of the darkest, fiercest, most vindictive character. When Christianity first encountered them, they were as ignorant, as barbarous, as much without hope, and without God in the world, as any of the Pagan tribes and nations to which the Gospel is now sent.

But during the long progress of ages, the Gospel was preached, the Scriptures were translated, the generations were taught and trained, the foundations of the Church were laid, a native ministry was raised up, and the mighty change was wrought. For centuries all Europe was a missionary field; and at last, all Europe was converted from idolatry to Christ. The rude Goth, the roving Vandal, the treacherous Frank, the warlike Norman, the daring Saxon, the ferocious Hun, the sturdy German, the impetuous Celt, the hardy Scot, the fur-clad Scandinavian became a Christian.

Let it never be forgotten, that all the nations of modern Europe were evangelized and civilized by Christianity. This was its second great missionary triumph, not less decisive and important than the first. This is the work, which it was doing through all the Middle Ages. And though its power was greatly impaired by the corruption and despotism of the Papacy, yet its progress was onward and upward; and it prepared the material, out of which sprang the memorable Reformation of the Sixteenth Century. And now behold the result of missions to the heathen—Christian Europe, and Christian America, two continents conquered and given to Christ. Shall we, then, whose own ancestors were once savage idolaters, doubt the power of the Gospel to convert the heathen, and to win its final and universal victory?

When asked, therefore, what our missionaries are doing in India and China, we answer, precisely what the early missionaries and evangelists did for all the nations of Europe; and by the blessing of God with the same results.

And now, we are in the opening century of the third period. The first great conquest prepared for the second; and the second, with its glorious Reformation and revival, prepared all Europe and America for the third. The Holy Land was the first base-line of operation; then the Roman Empire; then Protestant Europe; and then America. First from Jerusalem; then from Rome; then from London; and now from London, and New York, and San Francisco to all the world. Westward the star of empire takes its way; and Westward has the Sun of the Gospel travelled, till it is now brightening all the eastern horizon with the dawn of a final day.

In obedience to the great command, which began to be fulfilled at Jerusalem, and has been fulfilling, on an ever-widening field, the Church, is now, in this Nineteenth Century, girding herself for that last aggressive movement, which is to make the boundaries of Christendom the boundaries of the world. The Christianity of this Nine-

teenth Century, with the glorious prestige of all the past, is active, aggressive, and hopeful. Her broad banner is floating on the breeze, and on it written "The everlasting Gospel for the nations."

We stand now in the midst of that going forth of the heralds of salvation, which seems to be symbolized in the visions of the Apocalypse, under the imagery of the flying angel. "And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting Gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, saying, with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come; and worship him that made heaven and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of the waters."

And now behold the demonstration of success and triumph, in our own day. Look abroad, over the heathen world, and mark the living witnesses of gospel grace in every missionary station, from Greenland to the Southern Cape, from Japan to the most distant islands of the sea. It is only three-quarters of a century since this last great work began; and see what wonders God has wrought!

In connection with Protestant evangelical churches, there is now in the missionary field, a grand aggregate of three thousand five hundred ordained missionaries, foreign and native, six thousand six hundred assistant missionaries, foreign and native, three hundred and twenty thousand communicants, and two hundred and twenty-five thousand scholars in the mission schools. Here are more than a quarter of a million of souls reclaimed from idolatry, added to the Church of Christ, and standing as living witnesses of the power of his gospel.

Can we doubt, that the power, which has converted this vast multitude to Christ, in answer to the prayer, and the effort of the Church, is competent to carry forward the work to its complete and final consummation? Is any thing too hard for the Lord? Is any thing too hard for Him who has accomplished all these wonders, and who has said to his Church, "The nation and the kingdom that

will not serve thee, shall perish. Yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted?"

In opposition to all this, it has sometimes been asked, in unbelief, Why has the progress of missions been so slow? If Christianity be Divine, and the only religion for man, why have not all nations been converted long ago? In answer to such an objection, it is sufficient to say, that the God of Providence is not straitened for time. "Providence," says one, "makes a step, and ages have rolled away." If it took four thousand years to prepare the way for the advent of Christ, and the first promulgation of his gospel to the nations, shall we say, that eighteen centuries are too long for its final consummation? If it took three centuries, to convert the nations bordering the Mediterranean Sea, and from five to ten centuries, to evangelize the great nations of modern Europe, are we to say that Providence is too slow, and that the chariot wheels of a final triumph are too long delayed, because the Gospel has not conquered all Asia, Africa, America and the islands of the sea, in less than a hundred years?

Let us not forget that almost all great movements are slow. The coral reefs are slowly built; but when at last they rise from their deep and broad foundations, they form the bulwark of mighty continents, and defy the ocean and the storm. Colonization is slow. The growth of nations is slow. The advance of science, of art, and of human liberty, is slow. The progress of the Gospel is in analogy with all other great moral movements. It has indeed, led the van, in the march of human civilization.

Let no one then say, that the work of modern missions has failed in its grand purpose of converting the world, because every thing has not been accomplished within this Nineteenth Century. When tempted to think, that too much money and time have been spent on the mission work, and too many valuable lives sacrificed, let us remember, that the foundations of Christianity among the heathen, have to be laid in the lowest depths, and that it

requires time to raise the structure. The apt illustration of one of our own missionaries now in the field, is here in point.

“We build, as they build a breakwater, upon some coast where there is no harbor. Year after year, thousands of tons of stone are quarried and brought and cast into the sea. Thousands of dollars are spent, but the passer-by sees not the faintest sign of any result. Years pass, and the waves roll on unbroken, but at last, a solid wall rises above the water, and remains to defy all storms to the end of time. How rejoiced the builders must be, when the first frail line of stone peeps out of the sea! Till then they have toiled in faith; then faith begins to be aided by sight, and they go on joyfully to assured triumph. Just so it is, that we rejoice over any sign, that Christ’s breakwater against idolatry and sin—the Christian Church—will ere long arise here high and strong,—lasting enough to bear all assaults, and defy all opposition. Men may say, ‘The sea has swallowed up all your Bibles and tracts, your teaching, your preaching, and your prayers, and gives no sign.’ But we can *see* the wall arising, and it shall never be swept away, for the corner-stone is Christ.”

Christianity has made no failures, has taken no backward step, has lost no real ground. A part of her ancient domain has, indeed, been overrun, by the sword of the Turk and the Saracen. Corruption, priestcraft and worldly ambition have seduced one portion of her followers; heresy and infidelity another; but Christianity herself, stands forth to-day, erect, vigorous, and joyful, the dominant religion of the world. Through all the conflicts and disasters of the past, despite of all treachery within and opposition without, she has pressed her onward way to the conquest of the world. Her progress is still onward, and with an acceleration of power, never known before. In the words of another,*

“Christianity is on her march, and nothing will stop it.

* Sylvester Larned.

She is moving forward; and whoever opposes her progress, will only be crushed to pieces. She throws off the puny efforts of Infidelity, as the majestic lion shakes from his mane the dew-drops of the morning. She asks no armistice or compromise from her enemies; if they will fall into the magnificent procession she is leading, they may yet be received; if not, they must abide the issue. Methinks the celestial bands are this moment welcome her approach to her native skies. Methinks the seventh Angel has the trumpet to his lips, and is preparing to sound Hallelujah!—for the kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever.”