

329
585V 4
2
The Great Commission.

A

SERMON

BEFORE THE

AMERICAN BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
FOR FOREIGN MISSIONS,

AT THEIR

MEETING IN BROOKLYN, N. Y.,

OCTOBER 4, 1870.

BY

REV. JONATHAN F. STEARNS, D. D.,

OF NEWARK, N. J.

CAMBRIDGE:

Printed at the Riverside Press.

1870.

American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions.

BROOKLYN, N. Y., OCTOBER 6, 1870.

Resolved, That the thanks of the Board be presented to the Rev. Dr. J. F. Stearns, for his sermon preached Tuesday evening, and that he be requested to furnish a copy for publication.

Attest,

J. O. MEANS.

S E R M O N.

“Jesus came, and spake unto them saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. 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. Amen.” — MATTHEW xxviii. 18, 19, 20.

NEVER was there a more impressive charge given to mortals, — as specific as it is comprehensive, as simple and affectionate as it is imperative and sublime. And the circumstances which form the setting of the precious gem are hardly less impressive than the words themselves.

Our Lord had kept that Galilean interview constantly in the expectations of his disciples from the very hour of his resurrection. The white-robed angel, with the flashing countenance, gave notice of it from the tomb door to the astonished women, and dispatched them with it to the disciples, along with the news of his actual rising. He himself sent them on the same errand the first time that he met them. The place was appointed ; and no doubt all through the five weeks or more of his intercourse with the disciples, not the eleven alone (for it is very plain from the narrative that there were others there, though Matthew mentions only the eleven), but the great body of the disciples of whom the eleven were the acknowledged leaders, were looking forward to the event, and preparing for it as the grand interview. Probably it was then and there that “he was seen,” as St. Paul

tells us, "of more than five hundred brethren at once." A most memorable meeting! In the words of the beloved missionary, Dr. Schauffler, "It was the only instance in the history of our globe when the whole church of Christ was assembled in one place, with Christ himself visible and audible in the midst of them. Till the eternal separation of the chaff from the wheat, of the good seed from the tares; till the consummation of all things — such a meeting will take place no more."

It is very evident that the giving of the great commission was the principal object of that gathering. What other topics our Lord discoursed upon, what instructions he gave, what tender consolations he administered, what prayers he uttered, we are not informed. No doubt he showed himself there in his glory, for he was no more the "Man of Sorrows." Not the Mount of Transfiguration witnessed a more glorious display than did that Galilean mountain; for he was all that forty days unfolding his heavenly splendors. "And when they saw him they worshipped him, but some doubted," — doubted perhaps whether it could be he whom they had known so lowly, now so resplendent in his Godlike majesty. He was king in his church now, and it remained only that he should commission his ambassadors.

So he begins (for there must be no mistake as to the extent of his authority, or his ability to carry through that which he has purposed): "All power is given unto *me* in heaven and in earth." What an announcement! Let those who contemplate Christian missions ponder it well. Power on earth over all the forces of nature, "over all flesh, to give eternal life unto as many as are given unto him;" power in heaven over all the angels of God, to make them his instruments over all the resources of omnipotence! One hardly knows whether he should rejoice most or tremble most in the presence of such

words. But it is their dear, faithful Master; so the disciples gather confidence, and are full of joy while they adore. "He came and spake," says the evangelist, — that is, he came nearer, he drew towards them as he said it, — "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore and teach all nations." The word *therefore* is not found in most of the oldest Greek manuscripts, and its genuineness has been questioned. But if not written it would be implied. The declaration of power is the foundation of the commission given. "I have all power, therefore go ye; go in my name; go in my strength. Teach everywhere just what I have commanded you. Bind all the nations, as my disciples, to that Holy Trinity of whom I am the Second, and an equal and inseparable Person. I will be with you. I will support you." And to this follows, in our translation, and with a fitness which of itself seems almost to establish its genuineness, the "AMEN,"—the Amen of the great Head of the church, the great Fountain of authority, the Voice that speaks, and it is done. "Let the injunction and the promise stand fast, till the world be no more."

Let us look attentively at the contents of this commission. It comprises in one short sentence the work of the church, the means or method of pursuing it, and the encouragement she has to expect success.

I. First, the WORK of the CHURCH stands before us in broad and unmistakable outlines: "Go ye and make disciples of all the nations." The translation here does not quite reproduce the original. The Greek word translated *teach* is the verb active corresponding to the substantive *disciple*: "Go ye and *disciple*, or *make disciples of*, all the nations, that is, all the nations of the earth: πάντα τὰ ἔθνη." It is a word of deep and comprehensive import, not at all answered by the word *Christianize*, in the loose sense in which we often use it. The ideal

of a disciple, as we gather it from the New Testament, includes both the outer man and the inner, the individual and the social. It includes believing in Christ, obedience to Christ, service to Christ, sympathy of spirit with Christ, likeness to Christ. Its initiative is conversion, its completeness the "measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." The command is: Go and convert all the nations to me; go and make them all, both in heart and life, both as communities and as individuals, *Christian*.

This was certainly a most formidable undertaking. Christianity was then in its germ. And the seed was, to the eye of man, the least of all seeds. Look and see what it had to encounter. The dense masses of India and China, then as now steeped in idolatry, the hordes of northern barbarians, the superstition and sottishness of interior Africa, the peopled wilds of America, though distinctly in view, no doubt, to our Lord's eye, and included in his command, were as yet unknown to most men, and hardly dreamed of by the people of Judæa. But directly around them, all the mightiest influences of the age were in sharp antagonism to the principles of the gospel. Greece, with its refinement, its artistic culture, its beautiful literature, its subtle and much boasted philosophy, and Rome, the mistress of the world, holding in her iron grasp all the resources of the age, were both sternly opposed to innovations in religion, and especially to a religion like this, forbidding and frowning upon their ambition and vices, and claiming to be exclusive *lord* over all men's actions and opinions. Only the despised and conquered people of Israel, a people already "scattered and peeled," professed to acknowledge the true God, and they, proud in their exclusiveness, and as worldly in their hearts as they were bigoted and superstitious in their religious conduct, regarded with peculiar hatred the faith which at once condemned their hypo-

critical practices, and, opening its heart of love to all mankind, denied all their arrogant claims.

To aggravate the difficulty, all these external obstacles — as he well knew who “knew what was in man” — had a deep root firmly fixed in the permanent principles of our corrupt nature, and however repressed in one form, would be sure to reappear in another, in every successive generation. Man, the child of God, was made by him to be the heir of the world. He was appointed as the high-priest of nature, to consecrate and offer up to God all its manifestations of his glory. What vast capacities has he! What sublime, we might almost say Godlike powers! But how fallen! The angel groveling like a brute, or raging and plotting like a demon! Intellect, social affection, morals, and religion, all bear, in him, the unmistakable marks of a deep degradation. In the worst cases this is too plain for a question. In the best, a close scrutiny, with the application of the right tests, forces the same conclusion. Heathen hearts, heathen homes, heathen society, heathen tribes and nations, heathen altars and temples — O what a picture! And outside of the domains of heathendom, within the bounds of a nominal Christianity, how much of the same debasement lurks in every corner, and even flaunts its odiousness in the eyes of the world! Human nature as it discovers itself all around us, as its seeds shoot into life ever and anon in our own hearts, makes us ashamed. And then the prospect! The future, dimly foreshadowed in the conscience and intimated by the analogies of nature, what shall we think of it? Is goodness the law? Is sin its own punishment? Is there a holy God distributing justice? Look at the fables of pagan mythology, its wild dreams of the state of the dead, its dismal metempsychosis, its hell with Stygian horrors. Poor, guilty, degraded, trembling humanity, what can be done for thee?

It marks the divinity of our blessed Lord, — his boundless goodness, his far-reaching penetration, his consciousness of a power which nothing finite could withstand, that he grappled at once with this huge empire of superstition and prejudice, of corruption and impiety, of degradation and wretchedness; and forthwith laid his plans, not to weaken, but to overthrow it, not to encroach upon its boundaries, but to take possession, in the right of sovereignty, of the entire domain. “The field is the world,” said he. “I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me.” “This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world, for a witness unto all nations.” “Ye shall be witnesses for me, both in Jerusalem and in all Judæa, and in Samaria, and to the uttermost parts of the earth.” “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel unto every creature.” Expressions so numerous, so explicit, so varied in form, and so coincident in matter, put the case, it seems to me, beyond dispute, that our Lord never thought of attempting less, or of suffering his disciples to attempt less, than to convert the *entire human family*. To the reputed wise men of the age the scheme no doubt appeared simply absurd. And then the instruments to be employed, — those eleven plain, unlettered villagers of Galilee, and their few associates! They conquer the nations! They revolutionize the world! They renovate the human race! It seemed an insane project. And so it would have been, but for the divine power that lay behind, and was pledged to go along with it. But our Lord knew what he was doing. He had not started the tower without counting the cost. And his disciples, weak and incredulous as they sometimes were, seeing now his risen form glorified before them, believed that he knew. And, trusting to his promise, they did not hesitate, but, as St. Mark says, “went forth and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following.”

II. And how did he direct them to operate? We come, in the second place, to the MEANS, or METHOD. St. Mark says they were to "*preach* the *gospel*." St. Matthew divides the direction into two parts, "*baptizing*" and "*teaching*." The reports of the two evangelists serve to interpret and supplement one another.

Our Lord, we know, made very little of external forms. He enjoined no ritual; he furnished no liturgy. But he made much of the divine *truths* which he taught, and, with respect to their true spiritual import, of the two simple sacraments which he instituted.

Some have endeavored to find, in the first propagation of the gospel, the indications of a secret society. But there is not the slightest trace of one. There was a society, but its principles and pledges were all open, and its initiatory rite a public profession. Such is the true import of baptism, whether administered to the adult, on the ground of his own faith, or to the child, on that of his parent. It is virtually a profession of faith, and as the initiatory rite by which membership with the church is consecrated and sealed, the introduction of it into the commission given us by our Lord indicates the importance of the church as an instrument of the world's evangelization. The world never will be converted by mere preaching, in the *restrictive* sense. There must be organization, there must be regulated coöperation, there must be mutual fellowship and help. The church with its distributed functions, its sacraments, its assemblies, its pastoral care, its schools of religious instruction, is essential both to the conservation of what has been secured, and for efficient and aggressive progress in what is yet to be striven for. But the church is not a mere independent society. It and all its members owe their mutual union to their union in heart and will with their adorable Head. Christian baptism is the seal of this union — as our catechism expresses it — "the

seal of our ingrafting into Christ." In its form and material it is a symbol of regeneration; the washing away of the old and the adoption of the new; and so indicates the kind of *men* who are suitable subjects of its privileges. In its force and effect, it is a rite of consecration. Our Lord would have in his church only pledged men. Therefore he bade his ambassadors administer this pledge, binding all who would be accepted as Christians to an unalterable self-consecration to the Holy Trinity. It is, so to speak, the oath of allegiance, by which, renouncing utterly their old life and making confession of their new faith and purposes, they devote themselves, publicly and forever, to "the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost."

If then we ask how men are to be brought to this position, and how fitted to fulfill its obligations, the answer is a simple one. Poor, wretched, sinful man must be made to know, appreciate, embrace, and be moulded and governed by the gospel of Christ. Therefore the good news must be *preached*, that is, proclaimed. It must be *taught*, that is, explained and inculcated. The object is not merely to convert men by implanting in the heart, through grace, a new spiritual germ, but to renovate them throughout, making thereby a new creature in Christ Jesus. Men must be made *Christ's wholly*, scholars of his doctrine, copiers of his example, obeyers of his commands, possessors of his spirit. And this, amidst the vast variety of characters, temperaments, and antecedent and attendant influences, of the various races, nations, tribes, and generations of men, requires the truth to be particularly applied. It must be taught, by all the *expedients* suited to obtain a lodgment for it in men's hearts; taught as the law was to be taught by speaking of it "sitting in the house and walking by the way;" taught in the family and the school, by employing precept upon precept, line upon line, applying it to the

heart, the conscience, and the life, and with a wise discrimination adapting it to all the exigencies of all the varieties of men to be brought under its influence. A permanent, and under God a self-sustaining character must also be given to it. It must be embedded in men's social life, organized into an institution, accepted by a solemn vow, installed among them by a public seal, as the bond of their fellowship and the law of their affections and activities. Therefore the holy sacraments must be administered and the church established.

And here we come to the true idea of *preaching* in its largest sense, — the term used in St. Mark's Gospel. Preaching in that sense, includes *both* the methods brought to view by St. Matthew. That is but a narrow conception of it which confines its functions to the sermon, or the public assembly. The pulpit could accomplish little without the church and its sacraments, and the Christian school. Indeed preaching, in its most restricted sense, would exclude more than half the functions of the pulpit. It is proclamation simply, that is the telling of the good news. But, in its most generic sense, preaching is teaching, and teaching is preaching; preaching is worship, and worship, in its public and social form, is a method of preaching. The church preaches by her songs, her prayers, her discipline, her example, her schools, her colleges, her presses, her gifts of charity — all her evangelizing work, just as truly as by her sermons and exhortations. It is the making *known*, *felt*, and *embraced*, "the truth as it is in Jesus." And thus it constitutes the sum and substance of the church's agency for the conversion of the world.

And what is that gospel truth — the subject matter of this preaching and teaching? "Whatsoever I have commanded you," said our blessed Lord. That is, all I have ordained and declared, whether with my own lips or those of my prophets and apostles. And this may

all be summed up in the words of the angel at Bethlehem: "Behold I bring you good tidings;" "for unto you is born a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord." SALVATION by the SAVIOUR, the divine, Almighty Saviour; the Son of God incarnate, crucified, ascended, everliving; salvation for the chief of sinners; salvation from all sorts of human ills, the fruit of sin; salvation free, full, perfect — yes, in a single word, SALVATION; that is the talisman which is to transform earth, glorify humanity, and open heaven.

The Christian system was indeed then but as a grain of mustard seed. But the germ, small as it was, had concentrated in it all the vital principles of the old dispensation, from whose root it sprang, and by whose sap and foliage and flower its organization was perfected; and all the power and spreading glory of the new, as the advancing ages should unfold it, and the latter day show it in its consummation. And this small grain of truth our Lord bade his disciples take as the subject matter of their preaching. It was as if he had said to them, "I have here an effective remedy for all the ills of the race. It is marvelously simple. Men will reject it and call it foolish because it is so. But it is potent. Go and carry it through the world. You have tried it, go and persuade your fellow men to try it. It was meant for them all. It is adapted to them all. It will need never to be changed. The Greek and the Jew, the barbarian and the cultivated, the most besotted and the most refined, will need nothing but this. It touches that which is most universal in man's nature. It will make men like unto the angels. It will transform them into the image of God."

Just this it was that the first disciples of Christ did. The world laughed at them; but they kept on preaching Christ crucified. And thousands of converts at once testified, from their own experience, to the power of the remedy; thousands of martyrs glorified the earth with

341

a heroism never before witnessed, and, in a few centuries, earthly power began to acknowledge a far higher power, and the whole Roman Empire veiled its mighty sceptre, and bowed reverently before the sign of the Crucified.

III. Now we inquire, where is the secret of all this? And this brings us to our third topic, namely, the ENCOURAGEMENT which the church has to expect success. Where does the mighty power lie? In the church and her ordinances? In the preaching and teaching of her able and faithful ministers? In the ideas and facts which form the subject matter of her teaching? These are powerful as instruments. But where is the arm competent to wield them?

We speak of the efficacy of *truth*. "Truth is mighty," says the proverb, "and will prevail." A great idea lodged in the general mind will work on, as our Lord says of the leaven, till the whole mass yields to its influence. Such truths as the fatherhood of God, the brotherhood of man, the law of self-sacrifice, the idea of holiness, fairly introduced into the thinking of mankind, will work mighty revolutions in the course of time, on all their customs, institutions, and characters. A Saviour crucified, the Son of God incarnate in our nature, giving himself up a sacrifice for the sins of the world, then risen, exalted at the right hand of God, ever living to fulfill all his purposes of love, coming to judge the world soon and take home his own, — it is a mighty conception! If we could only get hold of it, it would thrill us. But the trouble is, we do *not* get hold of it. And it does not get hold of *us*. The first Greenland missionaries, after toiling weary years to instruct their ignorant pupils in what they thought to be the first principles of religion, melted them all down, we are told, to their great surprise, by the simple story of the cross. But how often has even that melting story fallen upon the ears of depraved man

utterly powerless. Go tell it, Christian ministers, to your congregations, with all the pathos you can command. It will be to many of them no better than an old song. Had any or all the truths and facts of the gospel been recorded on its pages and then left, no recital of them by human lips would have had the efficacy to convert one human heart; they would have lain there as a dead letter.

Where then is the power? We say, in our theology, it is "in the work of the Spirit." And we say rightly. But who is the Spirit? He is the Spirit of Christ, one with him in the perfect oneness of the Godhead. Christ himself comes by the Spirit, speaks by the Spirit, acts by the Spirit. It is the power of Christ that works in him and through him. The secret of the power, then, is in the agency of CHRIST.

Let us not forget who he is that thus works with his disciples. It is he who once on earth walked the sea as if it were a beaten pathway, stilled the storm with a word, treated diseases as his servants, fed five thousand men with a few loaves and fishes, curbed the rage of demons and drove them out by legions with authority, and gave life to the dead. It is he who, on his divine side, "upholdeth all things by the word of his power," who *created* all things, who will dispose of all things, whose ready messengers the angels are, who reigns supreme over all creatures, and "of whom, to whom, and through whom are all things." Is there, in all this, no reality?

Some, in these days, speak of Christ as an ideal power, a mere personification. But he is a living PERSON, — thinking, purposing, willing, acting; the same that once walked the streets of Jerusalem; the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. We are all quite too apt to regard him simply as a *historic* personage; a Saviour that *was* and not a Saviour that *is*; one who has done his work in his day and is gone. But the promise of our

text comes to tell us he is not gone ; he is here still, in all the plenitude of his power, faithfulness, and love. For his words are (who can doubt their fulfillment), " Lo I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

In this simple fact lies the whole secret of the expected success. The obstacles are great, — some of them as great now as they were in the days of the apostles. And miracles have ceased. But *providence* and *grace*, two divine forces even more potent than miracles, remain still in full operation. And by these Christ acts ; and till the present order of nature is overthrown, and the dispensation of the Spirit ceases, he will *continue* to act. He has at his control all the forces of nature, all the forces of society, all the elements of human progress, all the thoughts, purposes, and dispositions of the human heart. And he is pledged to turn them all, sooner or later, into the channel of this enterprise. It is ours to carry the truth through the world, using the means of grace, and availing ourselves of the openings of Providence. It is his to open the way, and by his Spirit to give success to the endeavor. And here is the point to which all the encouragements of the church in this great enterprise converge. Her mighty, faithful, loving Lord has promised to be with her ; with her for this very purpose ; with her in all the plenitude of his wisdom and power ; with her to the end. She will work, all her faithful *members* will work, according to the laws which regulate all human working. She will use the means. She will gather and consecrate her resources. She will apply her strength. Obstacles will have to give way, opposition will have to succumb, truth will prevail, hearts will be changed, wills will be bowed, the whole earth will be redeemed and glorified. But while the faithful human laborer will not fail of his reward and the unfaithful will shrink away and be dismayed, the song that will employ all tongues, both on earth and in heaven,

will be : “ *Thine*, O blessed Jesus, is the kingdom and the power ; and thine be the glory forever and ever. AMEN.”

It is in this sublime and most inspiring enterprise of Christian love, that we, my brethren of this venerable Board, under the great Captain of our salvation, are engaged. Its history has been a signal manifestation of the faithfulness of the divine promises. When we look back to its feeble beginnings, and thence trace the line of its progress, though we have reasons enough for self-humiliation in view of the deficiency of our efforts, we have on that account all the more to adore the power that has been with us. For what has God wrought ? I have not time to present here even a specimen of the facts. Take them, for example, as they lie upon the pages of the recent admirable volume entitled, “ Foreign Missions, their Relations and Claims.” The simple statement is enough to put skepticism to the blush. What small exertions and expenditures ! What marvels of beneficence by the hand of God ! What by his wonder-working power among the nations ! What, in many a gladdening instance, by his grace !

This Board stands to-day among the noblest institutions in our land. Where, in all Christendom, shall we find its superior in all that constitutes a wise, resolute, far-reaching philanthropy ? Its record of the past sixty years challenges the admiration of mankind. It *has* it, among all candid, sober-judging men. Since it first ventured upon the doubtful responsibility, what a change has been effected in public opinion, respecting the feasibility, at least the value of the missionary work ! And when were the prospects fairer ? The ground has been widely surveyed. The precise nature of the work is becoming every day better understood. All over the pagan world, the old is giving way and the new beginning to be welcomed. All the signs of the times, all that goes to

make up the *genius of the age*, points in the direction of the missionary work. No people on the earth are in a better attitude for pursuing it than are we. Difficulties there are still; new ones will be frequently discovering themselves; but noble minds spurn easy discouragement. Higher and higher must be the motto of our aspirations. Onward, still onward, the law of our progress.

In this sublime walk of Christian beneficence, we, brethren, of these two Christian denominations, the Congregational and the Presbyterian, — we and our fathers, — have, during the past sixty years, been treading side by side in loving harmony. As brethren having but one interest, we have kept no separate accounts. Our contributions have gone into a common treasury. Our laborers, giving themselves up to the common work, have been distribute dover the same fields, with no distinction of denominations.

Now the time has come when, from the best judgment we can form, the interests of the common cause seem to require a partition. It is from no choice of our own that we, of the Presbyterian side, leave this honored Board, which for so many years we have contributed to build up, and where lie all the results of our past work, to our Congregational brethren. But the providence of God coöperating with his grace to bring about the late happy reunion of the long-divided Presbyterian church, — a result in which you all, yes all the Evangelical Christian world, have rejoiced with us, — seemed to demand of us a corresponding union in the missionary work. So judged our General Assembly, whose decisions we respect. It was indeed among the conditions of the reunion — one of the concessions by which, under God, our lamentable breach has been healed. At first many of us, clinging to our old relations, and taking advantage of the liberty expressly reserved to us as individuals, were disposed to excuse ourselves. But a second glance

taught us that we could not wisely or righteously do so. Our brethren of the other branch of the church had an established and widely operating missionary organization. By the reunion, its responsibilities became our responsibilities. It was fairly to be expected that we should rally around that, and employ our best strength to give it efficiency. We cannot doubt that the same great cause in which we have been engaged here — the cause of our adorable Master — the cause of human redemption — will be advanced by this movement. We trust you also will see it to be so. The change seems to lie in the very nature of the case, and we bow to the necessity as to the voice of God.

But, brethren beloved, though we go into another organization, we do not go into another enterprise. Our work will still be yours, and yours ours. And your success we will regard as our success, your trials our trials, and your joy our joy. We cannot pray for the prosperity of the Redeemer's kingdom, we cannot pray for the prosperity of the great missionary cause, and forget the AMERICAN BOARD. It was our first love. It has been, from our childhood, the source of some of our best Christian impulses. The fraternal intercourse we have enjoyed in it has been sweet and cordial. All this while our two denominations have been thus closely associated, and *there has never been a serious jar*. Whatever jealousies may have arisen elsewhere between these two denominations, never have they obtained a foothold within this sacred inclosure. And now we part as brothers part from the old homestead, — not in anger, not from jealousy of each other, not altogether in sorrow, for we have before us the most animating hopes, but with not a few very tender regrets. We part only because it seems better, especially since we have grown so great and some of us have formed new family relations, that there should be two households in the old family circle instead of

34/

one. And we shall often meet, no doubt, at least in spirit; often hear with pleasure of each other's welfare; often perhaps, in critical junctures, hold profitable counsel together. We who go out shall still, with gratitude to God, remember the fraternal intercourse we have here had with brethren of the same faith, the same modes of worship, and *almost* the same ecclesiastical order. Nor will we cease to love both the brethren with whom we have so long coöperated, and the noble institution which has been the vehicle of our common benefactions.

I will not say farewell either to the one or the other. The "honorary membership" which, I am happy to know, gives me the privilege to sit and deliberate in this Board, is, in effect, a *life* membership; and while life lasts, whether it be longer or shorter, and in the dying hour should reason still linger, it will be to me, I am sure, among the most soothing reflections, that I have been, and still am, a member of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions.

We take with us into our new relations some of its choicest missions. It would not have looked well on either side that we should have gone out empty-handed. But we leave behind, besides our common interest in all the missions that remain, which we have helped to establish, not a few, perhaps the larger portion of the beloved missionary brethren and sisters of our own church distributed among them. These we can ill afford to lose. But the ties which bind them to their present work are too vital to be parted, and we acquiesce in the necessity. They will be safe with you, as will yours with us. God bless them all, — those "precious sons" and daughters "of Zion, comparable to fine gold."

May his counsels guide, and his best blessing rest upon the brethren, venerated and beloved, who still occupy the posts of chief responsibility in this Board; the Corporate members, on whom devolves the decision

of all questions in the final resort; the Prudential Committee, who have in charge the immediate supervision of its widely extended, and, on many accounts, very critical movements; the secretaries, on whom rests so heavy a burden of care and labor, and who have borne it so nobly, — and, with them, the late venerated senior secretary, now released from his weightier responsibilities only to serve the same loved cause in method more befitting his years. May the evening of his life be as serene and hopeful as its meridian period has been full of able, faithful, and unwearied service.

We go, brethren, I repeat it, only to work side by side with you in the same Christian enterprise. As no discord has disturbed our long coöperation, so no mutual grudges mar our parting. Shall not the *division* of the Board be the *doubling* of the service? All the signs of the times call upon us now to gird up our loins. Let us redouble our zeal, our activity, and our bounty; and let all our rivalry be that of love and service to our Master, and all our mutual provocations the provoking of “one another to love and good works.”

This foreign missionary cause, in view of what we have now considered in respect to it, stands unrivaled before us, both in dignity and nobleness, and in solid practical worth. It is at once grand in its conception, vast in its comprehensiveness, beneficent in its achievements, glorious in its final aim. It demands, as it has to a great extent secured, the best talents of the ablest men. Our blessed Lord left heaven and came to this poor, pagan earth, as a FOREIGN MISSIONARY. We do not disparage the home work. But that needs the foreign, and will not prosper without it. THE FIELD IS THE WORLD. We are bound, all of us, to the CONVERSION OF THE WORLD. The most fundamental principles of our faith, the brotherhood of humanity, the universality of human needs and of the provisions and offers of salvation, the song of the an-

gels — “Behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be unto all people,” the words of Jesus — “I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me,” the *beginning* and the *end* of his great ministry, Bethlehem and Calvary, alike point to it. It makes a most conspicuous figure in the scenes of heaven. What is that new song heard by St. John in his wonderful vision? “Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us unto God by thy blood, out of every kindred and tribe, and people and nation.” And who are these that shall sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob! Why, men from every land and clime, the east, the west, the north, the south. Can you hope to sit happily among them and yet have done nothing to secure their redemption? Can you take a part in their song and yet have done nothing, or very little, for the redemption of the nations? Those narrow-minded professors who treat foreign missions as but a visionary scheme, may well question with themselves whether they have any fitness for heaven, or any true capacity for its joys.

This work, whether *we* take our proper part in it or not, is one that is *going* to *succeed*. God has proposed it, and he will raise up other instruments if we are unfaithful. Our Lord’s command to his church plainly intimates that he intended it should be done. He said, “Go ye and make disciples of all the nations.” Not go and preach to them merely, that they may have no excuse when they come to the great reckoning, but go and make disciples of them; go, and by the grace of God convert and sanctify them. Go and *do* it. Not only go and *begin* it; go and do what you can toward it; go and work at it till I come and put a stop to your efforts; but go and do it.” I, for one, have great hopes of this poor, fallen, sinful world. It has, I fully believe, a great and glorious destiny lying before it. This earth — not some strange, unknown, altogether different sphere, made up of its ma-

terials, but this green earth of ours — with its beautiful hills, valleys, streams, cataracts, and seas, its starry skies and its flowery carpet, held in its place, and its inhabitants held upon it, by the same natural laws, is yet to be filled “with the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.” Christ has been, and is, *right here* among his people; and working with them and by them, is going to do great things for it. If I have rightly read the prophecies, he is going to convert the world — actually convert it — by the same agencies, essentially, as are now in operation. He is not going to destroy it till he has glorified it. The dispensation of the Spirit, under which his church has lived ever since his ascension, is yet to have a larger development of its power than has ever hitherto been accomplished. The word, the providence, and the grace of God, working just as they now do with and through the agency of man, are abundantly adequate. It may take a long time. God’s ways are not as our ways. He chooses to employ in it the generations. Thousands of years have already passed since the work was initiated. But a great deal has been already accomplished. The thoughtful and discerning eye, looking over the ages, sees progress. It will take a new start by and by, when the preparatory work is completed, and, by the outpouring of the Spirit in greatly augmented measures, will march forward, “conquering and to conquer.”

Why then should the toiling but believing church suffer herself to despond or grow faint-hearted? We are in the right road while we are engaged zealously in this great missionary enterprise. Why should we be content with pecking here and experimenting there. Why not rise at once to the full conception of the great issues before us? Instead of skirmishing, and a mere guerilla warfare, contented with some trivial successes, why not at once besiege the city with a strong force, and lay our plans actually to take it? Let us obey the com-

mand, and so trust in the promises. No doubt the shout will yet be heard, not as a prophecy, but as the exultant proclamation of an accomplished *fact* — “The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ.” The world is Christ’s, and he will yet have it in possession. O that will be a blessed day for the faithful missionary, when, standing among the thousands of thousands of the redeemed above, he hears the shout running through all their ranks : “IT IS DONE,” — the great work in which he toiled and suffered so much, — “*It is done.* The kingdoms of the world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ.” Then will the praises of earth echo back the praises of heaven —

“ One song employ all nations, and all cry
‘ Worthy the Lamb, for he was slain for us : ’
The dwellers in the vales and on the rocks
Shout to each other, and the mountain tops
From distant mountains catch the flying joy,
Till, nation after nation taught the strain,
Earth rolls the rapturous hosanna round.”