

WAITING FOR GOD:

A SERMON

PREACHED IN GREAT QUEEN STREET CHAPEL, APRIL 26TH, 1867,

IN BEHALF OF THE

WESLEYAN-METHODIST MISSIONARY SOCIETY.

BY THE

REV. JAMES M'COSH, LL.D.,

AUTHOR OF THE METHOD OF DIVINE GOVERNMENT, THE INTUITIONS OF THE MIND,
EXAMINATION OF MR. J. S. MILL'S PHILOSOPHY.

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WAITING FOR GOD.

“The Lord is good unto them that wait for Him.” (Lam. iii. 25.)

MAN is required by his very nature as a creature, and from the dependent position in which he is placed, to take the attitude of *waiting*. For his encouragement he is assured that God “is good unto them that wait for Him.” Let us inquire what is involved in this duty, and consider how the Lord encourages them that perform it. If he who speaks, and they who hear, be this day waiting for Him, they will assuredly find that “the Lord is good to them.”

I. LET US INQUIRE WHAT IS IMPLIED IN WAITING FOR GOD.

1. *God has work for us, and we should be ready to do it.* “Unto Thee lift I up mine eyes, O Thou that dwellest in the heavens. Behold, as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress; so our eyes wait upon the Lord our God.” Such should be our habitual position,—that of servants waiting on the will and commands

of their master,—that of soldiers ready to obey the orders of their Captain: not proffering excuses, or seeking to devolve the task on another; but with a willing mind saying, “Here am I, send me;” and this, whatever be the nature of the service, whether honourable or dishonourable in the world’s estimation. It was thus that the apostles received the order, “Go and make disciples of all nations.” It was thus that, fifty years ago, the founders and the early Missionaries of this now great Society heard the voice addressed to them: “Preach the Gospel to every creature.” They did not wait, as some advised them, till they saw the nations prepared; till they found them enlightened and civilized by some other means; but they went forth in obedience to the command, to arouse a people who had as yet no desire for improvement; and to proclaim truth fitted to call forth their dormant energies, and bring enterprise, commerce, wealth, refinement, and science in its train, as one of the rewards which God gives to those who receive His Son.

2. *There are blessings to bestow, and we should be waiting to receive them.* Gifts have been promised, and we should believe the promise. God is offended with us when we doubt His word, His love, His willingness to bless us. Nothing grieves the kind Father so much as to find His children ever suspecting His goodness towards them, after He has given such proofs of it, and preferring the society of strangers, and the pleasures of the wicked. Rest assured that we cannot grieve the Holy Spirit more readily or deeply, than by doubting whether our Heavenly Father loves us, when He has given such evidence of His compassion. We cannot please Him

more certainly than by going to Him with such faith as we have, in the assurance that He will receive us, and give us what we need.

“ If a flower
Were thrown out of heaven at intervals,
You’d soon attain to a trick of looking up.”

But there are better things than flowers being thrown out of heaven, and let us be “looking up” for them. Let us not complain that the heavens are shut; the heavens were opened by Him who came down from heaven; a door has been opened, and no man can shut it. Blessings are being rained down, but our hearts are not open to receive them. The fountain is flowing, let us go out and drink of it. The manna is falling around us, let us go out and gather it. The sun is shining, let us not in sulky pride retire into the dark and damp cave of unbelief; let us go out into its light and heat, as the grass, and grain, and flowers, and trees rejoice in it at this season, and as they do so spring, and grow, and take their hue of health and proper colours, and rise to their full height, and hasten to bear fruit. “Be it according to your faith.” God blesses His people not according to their *worth*, but according to their *wants*; and in proportion as you feel your parchedness, and look that it may be allayed, so will be the shower that descends from these clouds, which are big with mercies. God blesses not according to the *merits of His people*, but according to the *merits of Christ*; and in the measure of your view of these merits so will be the grace imparted. Our supply from that running fountain will be in proportion to the vessel we take with us,—

“Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it.” Thus have the Missionaries of the Cross gone forth, both in early and in later times. They first heard the command: it was enough, and they set out; but as they did so, they were encouraged by the promise, “Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.” Being so bidden, they rose, and walked, and stretched forth their hands; and as they did so, they felt life and hope in every member, and in the encouragement of them they went forward. They did not stop till they saw fruit before they sowed; but they scattered the precious seed of the Word, looking to God’s faithfulness as “an evidence of things not seen,” as a bow in the clouds; or rather as the rainbow round about the throne, assuring them that in the spiritual, as in the natural, world, there should, while sun and moon endure, be seed-time, and also harvest.

3. *In waiting for God, we should wait His time.* For as to certain services which He requires, and rewards which He bestows, there is need that we exercise patience. There are some who allow in themselves a different temper. They are willing to work, so they think; but it is not in the way God prescribes, but in their own way. They would *work*, they say, and would take the credit of it; and so God requires them, in the mean time, to *wait*,—to wait and see God Himself working. They would be busy in His employment; but God would rather have them, for the present, suffer for His name. They would do good to others; but God hinders them in His providence, that they may see that what they need is, to get good to themselves; that, being reprovèd, and, as it were, converted a second time, like Peter, (Luke xxii. 32,) they

may then "strengthen their brethren." Or, they would be very much disposed to work in some public and conspicuous field; and God allots them an obscure and un-honoured sphere. Or, they would be ready to labour in the shade; but God calls them forth, to their annoyance, to toil in the heat and the glare of sunshine. Or, they would be diligent in the quiet valley; and God compels them to go up to the mountain top, where they are exposed to the storms of life, and to the gaze and reproach of men. Now, in all this, be it observed, there is self-will, when there should be submission to the Divine will. "*Whatsoever* thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might," is the command and rule to the Christian. Again, there are, who insist that God should give them every blessing at the moment. And when the prayed-for and expected gift is withheld, they begin to doubt and complain, possibly to abandon themselves to despair or scoffing, saying, with the unbelieving king of Israel, "What should I wait for the Lord any longer?" Surely we need only a moment's calm reflection to see how unreasonable, as well as unbecoming, this temper is. The wonder is, that we should get blessings on any terms, and not that we should be obliged to wait for them. How long will men wait for earthly blessings, still expecting them to come! How long will the ambitious man run after earthly honours, which ever vanish as he approaches them,—as the painted cloud before the boy who pursues it, in the idea that he would get riches, could he only clutch it! "Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and the latter rain. Be ye also patient."

He who is conscious that he deserves nothing, and that he needs much, will feel as if God were not exacting anything unreasonable in making him wait. He who knows how much is promised, and how certainly it will be granted in proper season, will be delighted to wait.

The Missionaries, at not a few of our Stations, have thus had to wait. It has not been uncommon for them to labour for long years without being encouraged by any conversions. But it has been quite as common, after fishing all night and catching nothing, that the sun has burst upon them without a dawn, and shown them Jesus standing upon the shore, asking them if they have had any encouragement, and bidding them "cast the net on the right side." (John xxi. 3-6.) And though they have "toiled all the night, and taken nothing, nevertheless" at His word they "let down the net," and find their heart's desire and expectation fulfilled to the utmost. (Luke v. 4-7.) Some, it is true, have been taken away ere they realized the results they were praying for. But the labour of such has not been lost,—not lost to the church, not lost to Christ; and others have entered on their labours, and found "houses full of all good things, which they filled not, and wells digged, which they digged not, vineyards and olive-trees, which they planted not." (Deut. vi. 11.) And though they themselves have died in the battle, yet, as the victory was gained by their help, they will not lose their share of the spoil; for they who were taken away, and they who are spared for a time, will meet once more, and "both he that soweth and he that reapeth shall rejoice together." (John iv. 36.)

4. Once more, *waiting for God implies desire and expecta-*

tion. We wait because we desire; we wait because we expect. We are anxious to glorify God by being employed in His service; and hence we are waiting for orders,—we are seeking opportunities of serving Him. We are longing for the blessings, as you see the husbandman looking over the whole sky for the coming shower to refresh his crops, or for the signs of dry weather to enable him to gather in his grain; as you have seen the mother in her eagerness, or the father, saying less, but not less earnest, looking out for a son or daughter who has been for years in a foreign clime, but who has promised to be at home at such a time. How is every object in the dim distance examined! how is every sound listened to! and “why is he so long in coming? why tarry the wheels of his chariot?” Ah, if we were longing for spiritual blessings in this spirit, they would come, assuredly come; and our faith would insure them, and our eagerness would hasten them: for “He that shall come will come, and will not tarry.”

Let us lay the blame on the proper parties, and not charge God with unfaithfulness. Let us rebuke our “evil heart of unbelief.” “Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss.” Ye ask slothfully, not caring whether ye receive or not: ye ask hypocritically, not willing to receive. Suppose I had this day a commission from heaven to proclaim that the millennium is now come,—that I saw in the clouds the brightness of His rising to establish on our earth the reign of peace, and love, and holiness, so long promised. Think ye that this would be glad tidings of great joy to all men? “What,” says the worldly man, “am I to let go my grasp of these earthly

objects, and henceforth seek for my satisfaction in things that are spiritual and Divine?" "What," says the man of pleasure, "am I to abandon these enjoyments, without which I would feel life to be a dulness and a burden; and now and for ever set my heart on the beauty of Christ, and the beauty of holiness?" "What," says the ambitious man, "am I to stop short in my ascent of the hill of honour, when I am about to reach its summit, and enjoy the rest and the prospect for which I have been toiling all my life?" Ah, there are persons praying, "Thy kingdom come," who do not wish Christ's kingdom to come. I have no special authority from heaven to fix the day and the hour of that glorious evening in the world's history, when the light is to shine with a greater glow than ever it has done in the dark and troubled day. But I have a commission to proclaim—God's reign in your hearts is pressed upon you. "The righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above;) or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." But you say you can do nothing without grace; you are waiting for it. Ah, there is reason to fear that, to all thy other sins, thou art adding the sin of hypocrisy. Thou art not waiting for grace, but, in thy secret heart, for something very different. Determined to cherish thy self-righteousness,

thou art waiting for self-indulgence, waiting for earthly goods and pleasures. God does offer thee grace, but thou wishest to remain graceless. Thou mightest be made humble, but thou art determined to continue proud. Thou mightest have thy self-righteous spirit subdued, and thou art resolved to lean on thine own deeds. Thou mightest have thy selfishness eradicated, but thou art resolute in pursuing thine own immediate worldly interests. Thou mightest become holy, but thou art bent on abiding unholy. Friend, I would strip thee of these false pretexts by which thou art deceiving thyself, but by which thou canst not deceive God. Away with this delusion that thou hast been "waiting for God," when thou hast been waiting for self-seeking ends. Let there be a surrender at once of this thy self-will. Commit thyself at once and implicitly into God's hands. If thou "knewest the gift of God," and how good He is to them that "wait for Him," thou wouldest even now submit thyself to Him, to do with thee as seemeth Him good; to bend thee as thou requirest to be bent, to change thee as thou requirest to be changed, and to fashion thee anew after His own pleasure. And say not that thou art waiting for the movement of the Spirit, as the impotent man waited at the pool for the troubling of the waters. For the spiritually impotent are cured, not by any wished-for movement of their spirits, but by Christ Himself as He passes by; and He is now passing by, and is ready to heal.

The best and most successful Missionaries are those who have faith in God's promises, and are eager in their expectations. They have caught the spirit of the "Apostle

and High Priest of our profession," who wept over Jerusalem as He looked down upon it. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem,.....how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings!" It was thus that Paul, the earliest Missionary to the heathen, feeling himself to be a debtor, first of all to Christ for peace and his soul's salvation, and then both to Greeks and barbarians, pressed on in his work—as a never warrior pressed forward in his schemes of conquest. Twenty years he had been labouring in the extensive regions of Syria, of Cilicia, of Pamphylia, Pisidia, Lycaonia, Crete, and Cyprus, at Ephesus, in Macedonia, and the principal cities of Greece; and this "in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness;" and yet he is as eager and confiding as ever. "As much as in me is, I am ready to preach the Gospel to you that are at Rome also:" "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved:" "My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed within you." There has been a like fire kindled and burning within the breasts of our later Missionaries. They have not wrought and fought as if they were hirelings, not caring whether they succeed or not; they labour as adopted "sons and heirs" of God, identifying themselves with His cause, and never satisfied till the end is gained. They wait, but they long as they wait, and are looking upward for light, and onward towards the

path before them. "I wait for the Lord, my soul doth wait, and in His word do I hope. My soul waiteth for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning: I say, more than they that watch for the morning."

II. LET US CONSIDER HOW THE LORD ENCOURAGES THEM THAT WAIT FOR HIM.

1. *It is a good thing in itself thus to wait when God so requires it.* But why is the blessing so long in coming? "Doth His promise fail for evermore?" These are questions which, in our "infirmity," (Psalm lxxvii. 10,) we are ever tempted to put. As we put them, the answer may very possibly be, It is so long in coming just because you are so impatient about it. God cannot send it so long as you are in so unfit a state to receive it. Christ cannot do mighty works in you, or by you, "because of your unbelief." Not till these winds of temper and passion have subsided, will the softening showers descend. When you have learned to "rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him," the blessing may come sooner than your hopes, and it may be larger than your expectations. Meanwhile, this impatience is fretting and chafing, is irritating and distracting, the soul; is rendering the time you have to wait, long in itself, and much longer in your feeling of it; and possibly incapacitating you for taking the steps necessary to secure the desired end. How much more becoming and satisfying the opposite temper,—the spirit of meekness and of patience; which shortens the time by the faith and confidence cherished; which anticipates and hastens the blessing, and is thus gratified, first by the prospect, and then by the reality,—thus securing both the

pleasures of hope and the pleasures of enjoyment ; while it braces and invigorates the soul, and enables it to use the means to procure the expected benefit! “ Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall : but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength ; they shall mount up with wings as eagles ; they shall run, and not be weary ; they shall walk, and not faint.”

2. *It is good to wait, inasmuch as in waiting we receive many valuable lessons.* A pupil or apprentice puts himself under a master, who promises to teach him a certain branch of knowledge. Now it is possible that, in fulfilment of his engagement, the master may just set the learner to work, and point out service after service for him. Would the scholar be thereby justified in charging his master with a breach of promise, and say to him, “ You promised to give me instruction and skill, and you set me instead to work and toil ? ” We see, at once, that if such a spirit were cherished by the pupil, it would indicate not only that he is ignorant of the branch of knowledge he wishes to learn, but that he is labouring under a more deplorable ignorance,—that he is ignorant of his own ignorance ; for it is in the very act of waiting on that master, and doing the work which he prescribes, that he is to attain the skill he is seeking. It is the same in the school of Christ. It is in the very act of waiting on the Great Teacher that disciples attain those holy sentiments and habits which constitute the spiritual good they are in search of. It is in the very work that they are strengthened and acquire spiritual health, and a meetness for enjoying the wages, which thus come to be as

pleasant as a reward after exertion, as rest is after labour.

No doubt the children of Israel, as they sang praises to God by the shores of the Red Sea, when they saw their oppressors sink like lead in the waters, were expecting to be forthwith carried into the promised land in triumph. But they were not then fit for immediate entrance into their "rest;" and so God kept them there for a time in the desert, and showed them wonders which they would never otherwise have witnessed: the manna lying every morning on the bare face of the wilderness; the water which the dry rock had yielded flowing on, unexhaled by the scorching beams of the sun, and undrunk by the thirsty sands; and the pillar of cloud shading them by day, and ever kindled into a pillar of fire by night. It was in beholding these miracles, and in the pure heaven-sent air of the desert, that they were purified from the ignorance and defilement of Egypt: and by the very time they had to wait, they were the better fitted for the sphere they were to occupy. Again, when the disciples attached themselves to the cause of Christ, they had a vague idea that there was to be the sudden appearance of a kingdom of glory. "Lord, wilt Thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" was the question which, under various forms, they were ever putting. "The kingdom of God is within you," was the answer given. It was in the very work of waiting on Christ's person, and engaging in His service, that they were to be ripened for the higher work before them, on earth and in heaven. What blessed privileges did they then enjoy!—privileges, it may be, not sufficiently valued at the time, but on which they afterwards

looked back with gratitude, saying, "Did not our heart burn within us, while He talked with us by the way?" Were they not blessed in hearing His discourses? Were they not honoured in seeing the wonders which He performed? Were they not trained to good, as they obeyed His commandments? These gracious communings with them, these faithful reproofs, were the April sunshine and showers, which watered the seed of the Word within them. Now, such, brethren, is the blessedness of all who wait upon the Lord. In conducting them into the promised inheritance, He takes them out into the wilderness, and speaks comfortably unto them, and shows them His love, and the miracles of His grace, in supporting the spiritual life within, while all around is so waste and desert. In this their training and discipleship they are made to wait upon Him, and receive instruction from day to day,—“line upon line, precept upon precept.”

It thus appears that God is good to all who wait upon Him, *while* they wait upon Him. We serve a liberal Master, who not only gives us wages at the close of our work, but food and raiment and many comforts while we work. We are not required to spend our days as those of the hireling, who is ever inquiring, “When will my task be over, that I may receive my hire?” Like the ox treading out the corn in ancient Israel, which his master was not allowed to muzzle, we eat ourselves, while we labour in God’s service, of the “corn” which maketh “men cheerful.” They who are in Christ’s vineyard do all sing while they work, and their shouting is like the shouting of the vintage. Being “filled with the Spirit,” they “speak to themselves in psalms, and hymns, and

spiritual songs, singing and making melody in their hearts to the Lord; giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Perhaps there is none of us who has not felt at times the irksomeness of waiting. We would like to reap the harvest without the labour of the seedtime. But it is otherwise ruled in God's house, where it is ordained that "if any would not work, neither should he eat;" and it is for our good that it should be so; for the labour is as essential to our health as the food we earn by it. Man had to work even in his unfallen state; and since the fall he must eat bread in "the sweat of his face:" and this appointment, which is a curse through the first man, is turned into a blessing by the Second. We would like to have the prize without the competition: and the prize of our "high calling" will not be withheld; but the training we have to undergo in order to attain it, may be as valuable as the crown that is awarded.

There are times when we wonder that God does not convert the world at once. We are disappointed when Missionaries have to wait for years before they see conversions; and because, after fifty years of missionary ploughing, we are made to feel that we have only touched here and there the surface of the wide field. And it is not for us to profess to be able to sound all the depths of the Divine counsels. But it is *ours* to gather the lessons which are thus read to the church. Why is not the whole world already converted by the exertions which the church has made? The answer to *us* is, That the church may have a field to labour in that it may do more than

it has ever yet done ; that it may train the young and its members generally to more thorough habits of giving and self-sacrifice ; that it may send out its noblest and bravest youths into the mission-field ; and that it may be made to feel its need of the blessing, and be led to depend upon it. You wonder that so little has been accomplished when so much work has been done. But the proper wonder is, that so little work has been done ; that for nearly a thousand years there was scarcely any missionary exertion in the church ; that even the Protestant Church, for two centuries and a half, did little or nothing for the heathen ; and that it is only a little more than half a century since the Church awoke to a sense of its duty, and that even now it has not realized anything like its full responsibility. The true wonder is, that God has encouraged us so much ; that He has raised up so many faithful Missionaries ; that He has opened a way for us in countries which seemed to be closed ; that He has removed prejudices and shaken old superstitions ; that around Stations and Circuits He has enabled us to gather tens of thousands of converts, not to speak of many who are now rejoicing before the throne on high.

3. Once more, *the blessing is larger because we have waited for it.* Why is it that man, when he has an arduous work to do, must do it when he can, and hasten to perform it ? How is it that, when he makes a promise, he must be ready to execute it when he can, and not wait till, as he supposes, some more favourable opportunity may present itself ? Plainly because his power is limited, because his time on the earth is uncertain, and if he let one opportunity slip, another may never present

itself. But no such weakness is laid on the High and Holy One who "inhabiteth eternity," and with whom "one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." The time can never come when it is impossible for Him to complete His designs. He needs no assistance from other beings for the accomplishment of His purposes, that He should act when others concur with Him. Nothing can fall out unexpected by Him, to whom all things are known from the beginning, that He should change His plans and suit them to circumstances. No coming opposition can thwart or stay for one instant the progress of those plans which have been designed in eternity, that He should fulfil them before the time. He can allow opportunity after opportunity to pass away, till at last the "fit time," "the set time," "the fulness of times," comes.

Why is it that the sailor, when he sees the coming storm, must be all bustle and activity? Why, for instance, in that vessel which carried the Apostle of the Gentiles to Rome, had they to resort to so many expedients,—to undergird the ship, and cast out the anchor, and strike the sail, and cast out the wheat, and lighten the ship; and why at length had they to escape, "some on boards, and some on broken pieces of the ship?" why all this anxiety and dismay? Plainly because they felt themselves driven on Adria by elements over which they had no control; by winds which would not cease their ravings at their command; by waves which rolled in spite of their entreaties: because they feared those yawning gulfs which were ready to swallow them up, and those rocks which would have stood unmoved while they dashed

their frail bark into a thousand pieces. Contrast this fear, this conscious weakness, with the calm and serene power of Jesus when on the Lake of Galilee, and you will at once see the superiority of Omnipotence. The tempest was loud, as in the other case, and the ship was covered with the waves, and the disciples were in great alarm: and Jesus was asleep; but He arose as a Master, and "rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm." Such is the might, such the wisdom, such the tranquillity of the operations of God. He can allow the floods to rise, and exert their force, and spend their strength; but the instant He says, "Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further; and here shall thy proud waves be stayed," the waters must begin to recede. Amid all the storms which agitate our sky, He who flies "upon the wings of the wind," and rides "upon a cherub," is still at the head of all the powers of the universe, leading them to fulfil His wise purposes. And this is the reason why His plans move along in such magnificent order, with such dignity and majestic ease. In His works there is none of the imperfection which arises from haste, none of the confusion which arises from anxiety. All is order and beneficence amidst so much complexity and seeming irregularity. Everything is happening at its most appropriate time, amid so much apparent delay and procrastination. While nothing lingers beyond its time, nothing hastens to a premature conclusion. And this is the reason why His plans are marked by infinite wisdom,—why they are at last so beneficial. While man must act when he can, the Almighty waits till it is most advantageous. God delays the blessing only that it may be

larger when it comes. His counsels ripen slowly, that the ear may be fuller, that the fruit may be richer and mellow. How is it that the river, which rose in so small a fountain among the rugged hills, now sweeps along so magnificently among fertile plains? It is because, in its lengthened and circuitous course, it has gathered contributions on either side, receiving a new stream from every valley which it passed. Thus it is that the stream of God's bounty is made to turn and wind, only that it may receive contributions from every quarter as it sweeps along, and flow at length more largely into the bosom. Hence it is that the royal munificence of His bounty knows no limits at last. Thus it is that He is good to them that *wait* for Him. His blessings come not in scanty proportions, and according to the mere letter of the promise, but in flowing streams, which far exceed the most ardent expectations of His creatures. He does "exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think."

These truths are illustrated in the history of Methodism. The system was born of God, working in the bosoms of the men who founded it. They went forth like Abram, "not knowing whither they went;" but they went in sincerity and faith, and God encouraged them. They commenced their labours courageously in the most secular age of the history of our country, and were met everywhere, like their Master, with mockings and revilings; but surely the results gained have been larger than their widest expectations. They meant to put life into the Church of England, and to an extent succeeded; for

Methodism is a great fire kindled, and is radiating heat all round it, and is felt in its influence by those who decline to be absorbed within it. And now, when the Church of England, which we love and venerate for all that is good in it in the past and present, is threatening, —we grieve to say it,—is threatening, unless arrested by her own members, to bring this country to the state of the Continent, where there prevails an imposing Ritualism, with a keen-eyed infidelity lurking like a serpent in the midst of it; her little sister has grown up, has taken a place of her own, and in her wide and widening sphere is exhibiting everywhere the doctrine of pardon by the blood, and regeneration by the Spirit, of Christ. Apparently so weak when she first set out, the Wesleyan community has become two powerful bands. I saw in the United States last summer a daughter with a more extended influence than the mother: a church with a million of members celebrating its Centenary with enthusiasm; pressing the Gospel everywhere upon the poor of the great cities: spreading away to the outskirts of civilization hundreds of miles beyond the Father of Waters; and labouring with extraordinary zeal among those who were so long slaves, but who are now free. It was with intense feeling that I listened to a Methodist bishop, black as ebony, preaching a fervent, and in every way an excellent, sermon to his race, listening with eager eyes, and drinking in the words of truth proclaimed by him.

And here you will allow me, on my own responsibility, to say a word about the country in which I have resided the last fifteen years. The signs of the times seem to me to show pretty clearly, in regard to Ireland, that, at no very

distant date, the alternative will be put to Great Britain, Are you to endow all sects, or endow none? I say nothing here as to whether it is, or whether it is not, desirable that such a crisis should come; but I feel myself called on, in this place and every place, to say that, should it be sent, we shall have a very solemn duty laid upon us; and, in the view of it, we have now a very important duty to discharge. In the apprehension of it, the Protestant churches have to see that their strongholds, and the spiritual weapons which alone God has put into their hands, are in order; and, should it come, there will not be two minds among those I address as to which of the alternatives to take. The Wesleyan body has never sought endowments for itself, (though I believe it has promoted order, and peace, and loyalty in the country with as much zeal as any endowed church,) and, therefore, it cannot be charged with inconsistency or illiberality when it insists that this country shall not sanction what it believes to be an unscriptural system; and that, on the wretched pretext of bribing the priesthood into quietness, it shall not expose our government to the temptation of entering into, and continuously carrying on, crooked negotiations with a body, which, wherever established, on the Continent of Europe, or in South America, has been a source of disquietude to every statesman. Should the day arrive when all sects are put on a like footing in Ireland, with a "fair field and no favour," I am not afraid of Protestantism. As if in preparation for it, the Established Church—I willingly bear my testimony—is in a healthier state than ever it has been in any previous age; and the Presbyterian Church, on the part of many of its zealous minis-

ters, is bracing itself manfully for the emergency, and seeking to call forth the liberality of one of the most industrious and loyal communities in Her Majesty's dominions. In the shock these two churches will be aroused, and will speedily rise to the same standard of giving as the Wesleyans (and, I may add, the Catholics). As crutches are withdrawn on which persons at present unduly lean; as Ritualism dies out for want of popular support, which it will certainly not find among Protestants in that country; I do expect (I may at least pray) that the Protestant churches, at present jealous of each other, will come to a better understanding, and unite their efforts for good; that there will be openings where the door is at present shut; and that altogether there will be a brighter day in the religious history of Ireland. Meanwhile the Wesleyan body is quietly doing a good work,—an instance of which I see under my own eye. Knowing how important it is that its ministers, in these critical times, should be highly educated, it is erecting a very beautiful college, in the city, Belfast, in which my own field of labour lies. I ask that some of its ablest men be sent there as professors; and I confidently expect, that, with the Divine blessing, it will send from its walls a band of gifted and ardent youths, bent on evangelizing Ireland, and evangelizing the world.

From our favoured island position, looking across another channel, we see that on the Continent the time is a critical one, the emergency great. My visits have left on me the deep impression that the cause for fear there does not lie so much in the strength of Romanism, as in the weakness of Protestantism. The Romish system is no

doubt still strong, and capable of a fearful death-struggle; but after the defeats it has suffered, and the humiliations to which it has been exposed, its security of life lies mainly in this, that there is no strong living power to oppose it. Superstition will never be put down by infidelity, which only disgusts our nobler and finer minds, and alarms the timid to drive them back to their old faith; and the Protestant churches are in most places seriously trammelled by state restraints, and by being so much bound up with an unbelieving world, and even an avowed rationalism. No one can look on the Continent without seeing that it has days of trouble before it, in Eastern questions and in Western questions, which our wisest statesmen try to put off, but find that they cannot settle:—in Turkey, decayed to rottenness, and wasting the finest lands on the earth; in nations further west, given up to luxury and sensuality, with no power to restrain them; and in the old superstition dying out, without men being ready to receive the pure and purifying religion of Christ. Blessed be God, even in the midst of current rumours of war there is still a door open. It was by such a door that Robert Haldane entered, and from his short visit has sprung much of the best evangelical life of Switzerland and France for the last fifty years. There is such an opportunity at present. Let us hasten to embrace it; for we know not how soon the door may be shut. While many are rushing to that Grand Exposition, which is exhibiting such treasures of high art, and which is expected to bind communities in closer temporal amity, let Christians see that yet better treasures be exposed to the view of the people, and that there be a wide proclamation of that truth of God which

alone can effect a universal brotherhood among the distracted nations.

The foreign labours of this Society present a special illustration of the truths I have been proclaiming. The association was founded, more than half a century ago, in the faith of God's word. The early Missionaries went forth in obedience to the command, sure that, in some way or other, God would bless them; prepared to wait, and yet bent to go forward—like the reined horse, thoroughly obeying the bit, but curvetting as it does so, and eager for the race. And have not they all been ready to testify that God has been faithful and good to them? The difficulties which they met with at times, and the deliverances that ensued, are symbolized in an incident of your former "John Wesley" missionary ship. The vessel struck upon a reef, and was in danger of severing, and leaving her crew in the cruel waters; when, by a sudden convulsion from beneath, the waves rose to an unwonted height, and floated them into safety. It is a type of God's manner of dealing with you; first, for your training and instruction, placing you in helpless perplexities, and then floating you over them, and making you ride gallantly upon the waves. You have not done so much as you could wish,—God forbid that you should ever be satisfied with what you have done!—but surely much has been done; the praise be to Him, who hath done it. At home you have created a missionary spirit, such as did not exist for ages in the Protestant churches, and you are training children to give to the cause from their earliest years. A public sentiment has been created, and your contributions come in steadily as the seasons; and if there be a fear, as

there was this year, that there might be some deficiency, the prolonged winter is followed by a more exuberant spring. Prayers are rising daily from millions of Christians, and weekly from tens of thousands of congregations, who are giving themselves no rest, and giving God no rest, till the promise be fulfilled, and the Spirit of the Lord be poured on all flesh. From the families of your people there come forth annually, as regular as the buds of spring, and more beautiful far, a band of young men ready to go where you may send them—to the rudest lands, and among the wildest savages. Looking abroad, you have hundreds of agents toiling and praying as only heaven-called and heaven-sent men can pray and toil. You are elevating industrially, intellectually, and morally, as well as religiously, the rude tribes of Africa in Stations scattered along a coast of hundreds of miles. The West India group of islands, which used to tempt our countrymen to them by their temporal riches, have tempted you to them by their spiritual poverty, and you have sought to unite blacks and whites in the bonds of a holy love. There is your new missionary ship, an emblem of the Gospel, as it glides along among the waters which give way before it, and carries Bibles and Missionaries from isle to isle in Polynesia. You have planted fortresses from which to go forth in the work of conquest amidst the idolatries of India and Ceylon. You are girdling the coasts of China as a preparation for penetrating inland into that vast territory. You have assisted to translate the Holy Scriptures into tongues in which there had not been before a word expressive of spiritual truth. There are in your ranks, as I understand, a goodly number of

native Catechists in training for evangelistic work. Having prosecuted this labour in the strength of God, He has encouraged you by showing you those who not long since were naked savages now sitting at the feet of Jesus, "clothed, and in their right mind." He has blessed, and is at this present time, in South Africa and elsewhere, blessing you with times of gracious revival, in which numbers have been and are being converted. We rejoice here over these repenting sinners, but there is still greater joy in heaven. While you are praising Him here at your great anniversaries, a larger assembly, saved by the agency of your Missionaries, is praising Him in the temple above.

Some of my hearers may have gone up from Riffelberg to Görner Grat, in the High Alps, to behold the sun rise. Every mountain catches the light, according to the height which the upheaving forces that God set in motion has given it. First the point of Monte Rosa is kissed by the morning beams, blushes for a moment, and forthwith stands clear in the light. Then the Breithorn and the Dome of Muschabel, and the Matterhorn, and twenty other giant mountains, embracing the distant Jung-Frau, receive each in its turn the gladdening rays, and blush each for a brief space, and then remain bathed in sunlight. Meanwhile, the valleys between lie deep down, dark and dismal as death. But the light which has risen is the light of the morning, and these shadows are even now lessening, and we are sure they will soon altogether vanish. Such is the hopeful view I take of our world. "Darkness covered the earth, and gross darkness the people;" but God's light hath broken forth as the morning, and to them who "sat in darkness a great light" has arisen.

Already I see favoured spots illuminated by it:—Great Britain and her spreading colonies, with certain continental countries, and the United States with her broad territory, already stand in the light; and I see, not twenty, but a hundred points of light, striking up in our scattered mission stations,—in old continents and secluded isles and barren deserts, according as God's grace and man's heaven-kindled love have favoured them. And much as I was enraptured with that grand Alpine scene, and shouted irrepressibly as I surveyed it, I am still more elevated, and I feel as if I could cry aloud for joy, when I come up to these anniversary meetings, to see the light advancing from point to point, and penetrating deeper and deeper into the darkness, which, we are sure, is at last to be dispelled, to allow our earth to stand clear in the light of the Sun of Righteousness.

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