

ADDRESSES

DELIVERED AT THE

CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION

OF THE

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

OF THE

Presbyterian Church,

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FOREIGN MISSIONS.

BY REV. MATTHEW HALE HOUSTON, D.D.,

Baltimore, Md.

THE honored brother who has so kindly presented my name before you has, in fitting terms, introduced to us the great work of Foreign Missions as the culmination of the work at home. It is indeed the glory of the home Church that the grace of God, received in any part of her borders, speedily flows out with blessing to the very ends of the earth. Men see, as they never saw before, that the riches of gladness and peace, placed in their hands by their glorious King, the ascended Redeemer, constitute them by His command debtors to those who are the poorest of the poor on the earth—those who have never heard His name; and from north and south, from east and west, are seen the feet of those who hasten forward bearing the priceless treasure, that the debt may be discharged. As the gift of God's grace at home carries with it grace to distant lands, so every awakening to life and hope in those regions where only the shadow of death has reigned sends hitherward a blessing to us. The thrill of a new spiritual creation on the Congo, in Tokio, in Madagascar, in Fiji, is passed round the globe, as an electric flash, for the increase of our faith and joy.

The scenes that we have witnessed to-day spring from the influence thus borne back to us from the foreign work. In the fields beyond the sea the divisions of the great Presbyterian army first saw clearly that their work for Christ is one. Confronting the broad entrenchments of heathendom, the videttes thrown out from these sacramental hosts first learned to march shoulder to shoulder—the laborers began to work hand to hand. We turn our eyes to Japan. We see there missionaries of the Northern Presbyterian Church, missionaries of the Southern Presbyterian Church, missionaries of the two Reformed Churches of this country, and missionaries of the United Presbyterian Church of Scotland sitting together in the same presbyteries and coming together in the

same General Assembly, all coalescing with seven thousand Japanese Presbyterians to form the United Church of Christ in Japan. As our noble Congregational brethren view the delightful affiliation, as they say in their hearts, "Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity," they can scarcely resist the gentle invitation to come and cast in their lot with our men, thus putting into one compact organization more than one-half of all the Protestant Christians of Japan. When this has been done, when the walls of spiritual truth now rising in that bright land have been thus buttressed and cemented, what chance will there be over there for fine-spun and noxious theories of a probation after death? Going further east, we see all the Presbyterians in China arranging to unite under one General Assembly, so that there shall be in that vast empire but one Presbyterian Church. Then, from where we now stand, turning southward we see the same unification taking place in Brazil, and the General Assembly which met in St. Louis last year passed a resolution approving of its missionaries in that field, combining with the missionaries under the care of the General Assembly then in session in Omaha to form, with the native Christians, one Brazilian Presbyterian Church. It is these lights flashing back to us from far-off shores which have revealed distinctly the truth that our work is one. Whether there shall be in this land of ours two Assemblies, or whether there shall be a single Assembly, we need only fix our gaze on the broad enterprise among all kindreds and tongues and tribes, and we see that in heart, in hope, in endeavor there is among us a true, an indissoluble union. Would we strengthen, would we knit closer these bonds of union? Then, as we clasp hands here to-night in token of the unity of the Spirit, let the full outpouring of every desire, let the high purpose of every soul be—the whole world for Christ.

To each of the two Churches whose representatives are gathered here, it has been given as a crown and chief glory to take a full part in this work. As we learn that before the august Assembly holding its sessions in this city report is made, that the gifts cast into the treasury of this cause during the past year amount to more than \$900,000—exceeding those of any other Church or society in this land for the same work—our hearts rejoice; and as we see the missionaries under the care of this Assembly in many lands—in China, Japan, Corea, Siam, Laos, India, Persia, Syria, Africa, South America, Mexico, Papal Europe, and among the Indian tribes of our own land—504 men and women, joined with 1044 native preachers and teachers, making known the unsearchable riches of Christ in many tongues, we bless God for the abundant

grace thus bestowed. Well may this Assembly say, in a sense higher than was ever dreamed of by the Trojan hero, "*Quæ regio in terris nostri non plena laboris.*"

In the Church South, from the day on which she first took up her independent task, Foreign Missions have been recognized as the imperial cause. When in that day she found herself girt about as with a wall of fire, when no missionary had it in his power to go forth from her bosom to the regions beyond, the first General Assembly put on record the solemn declaration that, as this Church now unfurled her banner to the world, she desired distinctly and deliberately to inscribe on it, "in immediate connection with the Headship of her Lord, His last command, 'Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature,' regarding this as the great end of her organization, and obedience to it as the indispensable condition of her Lord's promised presence." And when the way was opened, she sent forth her sons and daughters, who have gone to China, Japan, Mexico, Brazil, the United States of Colombia, Italy, Greece, European Turkey, as well as to the tribes in our own Indian territory. She has now 66 missionaries in the field, who are associated with 38 native helpers. The receipts of her treasury for this cause have, during the last two years, advanced more than twenty per cent, amounting now to \$88,000. The declaration made by the first Assembly has remained the controlling sentiment of the Church. We love our own land. Our heart's desire and prayer to God for our own people is that they might be saved. Yet, we believe that we can only have power to save our own people when Christ abides in us; and if Christ be in us, we must have it as our chief endeavor that all men be saved and come unto the knowledge of the truth.

In carrying on this work it is of the first importance that we guard and conserve its simplicity, wherein lies its power. Every adjunct which is embarrassing because it is unessential, must be cut away. The civilization—the social forms and usages—of lands that are called Christian, can form no part of the Gospel which is to be propagated. On the contrary, it is now coming to be clearly recognized that the attempt to shape converts from heathendom on the model of our Western life—what has been termed the "Europeanization of the Asiatic"—has been a serious drawback, an obstacle to success.

The man who wins in the mission field is not the Englishman who goes there "carrying all England on his back;" not the American who holds up the type of life seen in the United States as a model for all men. He obtains the prize who becomes an Asiatic that he may gain the Asiatics; who becomes an African that he may gain the Africans; who

makes himself all things to all men that he may by all means save some; who, when Christ is formed in the heathen, the hope of glory, allows that life of Christ freely to develop according to the environment in which it is placed. And just so recognition must be made of the fact that it is no part of this work to extend our modern educational systems. In the whole New Testament record of missionary methods and achievements, there is not a word about schools as a missionary agency. The greatest of all missionaries declared, that Christ had sent him to preach the Gospel, not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect; and he determined to know nothing among the heathen save Jesus Christ and Him crucified. We might plant our colleges in all the cities of every idolatrous land; we might gather into them thousands and tens of thousands of heathen youth; we might teach mathematics, astronomy, geography, political economy—all that modern educational culture demands—and when we had done all, what would have been accomplished? There are hundreds of men in India to-day who know all these things, and yet join in the bloody sacrifices of Kali, and worship the sacred cow. There are thousands of men in that land and in other lands who have all this learning, and yet drift helpless on the dark sea of rationalism and infidelity. Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? The missionary of to-day must go forth, just as Paul went forth, knowing surely that no man can even approach the gates of true knowledge until he has learned of Jesus Christ and Him crucified; that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; that the grand and simple work committed to him, as the messenger of the kingdom, is to testify, as far as lieth in him, to every human being, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ; that to this object everything must be subordinated, everything made subservient; and that if mission schools be opened, their express design, plainly declared, must be to teach all things whatsoever Christ has commanded. Such is the good seed which the Master has put in the hands of all His laborers, and when it is sown broadcast in the world, there will be a reaping even to a hundredfold.

The remark has sometimes been made, rather jestingly, that there can be no missionary address without an allusion to "fields white to the harvest." I am free to confess the opinion that there are no words of the Bible which, in this connection, have been more frequently misused. Friends of the mission work sometimes speak of China, Japan, India, Africa, as fields white to the harvest. If they looked out on some of the broad forest lands of the State of Pennsylvania, with only a

patch of cultivation here and there, surely they would not say of that wide expanse of territory, that it is white to the harvest. The undergrowth must first be cleared out, the timber felled, the ground broken with the plough, the seed cast in, and then, when the early and the latter rains have fallen, and the sun has turned the waving stretches of green into golden wealth—then, and not till then, will the fields be white to the harvest. In the great mission lands of the world we have as yet only patches of cultivation, and we are clearing out the undergrowth; that is all.

What were the fields which our Lord Jesus pronounced already white to the harvest? They were the streets and lanes of Samaria. And how were they white to the harvest? One of the inhabitants of those streets is held up to us as a type and example. She was a sinful woman; but there were two great truths that she had learned—one was, that her father, Jacob, had in that mountain worshiped Jehovah, the true God; the other was, that there is a Messias, which is called Christ, who could teach her and her people all things. With these two great truths in her mind, she was led to offer up a prayer—a poor, beclouded prayer, yet sincere—for the Holy Spirit, the living water; and at once the Blessed Spirit came into her heart, convicted her of sin, and brought her to trust in the Christ. In the same hour many of the Samaritans of that city, like her, believed in Him, and the harvest was gathered in. Would you have Japan, China, Burmah, India, Africa white to the harvest? Send forth great bands of laborers into those lands; let the truth of the one living God, and of Jesus Christ, who tasted death for every man, be proclaimed everywhere publicly and from house to house; as soon as all the people have heard, you need no longer say, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest; you may lift up your eyes and look on the fields; from many a heart will prayer go up for the Holy Spirit; and under the might of His power there will be reaped and brought into the garner sheaves upon sheaves, making the shoulders of all laborers to bend under the weight of the burden; the feast of ingathering, with all its joys, will be ours, and the earth will resound with the song of the harvest home.

Of these coming glories a pledge and foretaste has already been given us. We look back to-night to the time when the Presbyterian Church in this land had no separate agency for the administration of her Foreign Mission work; when her officers and members formed part of the constituency of the American Board; when all her contributions to this cause, like the contributions of other churches in that day, amounted to but a few thousands of dollars. It was the time when

Foreign Missions were on their trial ; when many looked upon the enterprise as visionary, and others doubted its success. The Captain of the Lord's host then dealt with us as a skillful commander deals with an undisciplined, mistrustful body of troops. He does not lead out the raw and timorous recruits to a general engagement. He must first build up their *morale*. So, he attacks the enemy's outposts. He captures some outlying detachment. He carries an entrenched village ; and when, by these minor successes, confidence has been infused into all His ranks, then it is He leads out the army to the high places of the field, and the battle rages from end to end of the line.

So the Lord Jesus dealt with us in the day when we were constituents of the American Board. He did not suffer us to enter the broad provinces of China. He held sealed the gates of Japan. He put barriers in the way of any work in India. But He led us to a smaller field. Just south of the watery track by which swift steamers now bear the messengers of salvation from our own shores to the teeming millions of Asia, He chose a group of islands, and on them He showed His people that the weapons of their warfare were not wielded in vain.

The work in the Sandwich Islands began in 1820. The missionaries sent out by the American Board found ready access to the people. They translated the Bible. They taught thousands of the natives to read. They preached the Gospel from valley to valley. And yet, thirteen years after the work began, not more than half the people had been reached by the Gospel (though the whole population of the islands was only one hundred and thirty thousand), and the number of converts was less than one thousand. But, in 1833, the American Board set itself deliberately to the solution of the question, How may the Gospel be preached at once to all the inhabitants of the Sandwich Islands? A letter of inquiry was sent out to their missionaries, stating the problem and inviting a reply.

The missionaries returned a full answer, explaining how their forces were distributed, and calling for a reinforcement of forty-one workers, that the Gospel might be preached at once to every man, woman and child on the islands. The Board without delay sent out a reinforcement of thirty-two workers—the largest missionary force that had ever been dispatched from this land—and then the Gospel was preached, not only from valley to valley, but from shore to shore. To quote the language of Dr. Rufus Anderson, when “the primary truths of the Gospel had been generally diffused,” there came the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Then the voice of supplication and of weeping was heard in those island groves. Then the

houses of the missionaries were besieged all day long, and sometimes even to the midnight hour, by inquirers—men and women, saying, "Sirs, what must we do to be saved?" Then one missionary, in a single year, baptized five thousand of the people; and as the result of the great awakening, one-fourth of the adult population of the islands was added to the Church.

The converted islanders became themselves foreign missionaries, and pressed forward with the light of life into darkened regions beyond; and soon the American Board pronounced the Sandwich Islands no longer mission ground. Here, then, was the narrow arena on which the great Commander showed us how fields are won. Send in your strong reinforcements; preach the Gospel for a witness to all the people; and then the end comes.

Having shown this, He has led us forth to the broad places of the world; He has set us in array against the serried forces of heathendom in every land; and He bids us now, with all our resources, with all our men, advance to the final conquest.

In every great campaign there are opportunities which must be seized without delay; they are strategic points on the side of the enemy which should be occupied at once; and for this, concentration is demanded. So the American Board thought when it determined to throw all its available forces into the Sandwich Islands. The time had come when an example was needed in the Foreign Mission service. The question was raised at that time, Why does the American Board send so large a reinforcement to so small a field? The answer returned was, that in that field, to quote again the language of Dr. Rufus Anderson, was "an entire people in one compact group of islands, under one government, all easily accessible, and singularly prepared for the Gospel. In no other nation could the Board so well make the experiment of the possibility of an early completion of its work." The result showed that the Board had been guided by wisdom from above.

And now, fathers and brethren, to us has been given an opportunity, which is an exact counterpart of that seized by the American Board, only far grander and more splendid in promise. Beyond the Sandwich Islands, in the land first touched by the voyager to Asia, there lies an island empire, the Sunrise Kingdom. Did we study language to describe the present state of Japan and its people, we could find none more fitting than that used by Dr. Anderson, in describing the Sandwich Islands years ago. We see there "an entire people, in one compact group of islands, under one government, all easily accessible and singularly prepared for the Gospel." These are the isles which now wait for God's law, and it is no rhetorical figure, it is a plain statement of fact to say that

they expect us of the United States to bring the law to them. They remember that it was our people who first swung open the gates of their land to the world. It was a representative of our people who first took up his residence among them with a completed treaty in his hands. It was our people who built the first railway for them and set up the first telegraph line. Two-fifths of all their exports are bought by us. From our newspapers they get the world's news, except the scanty bits telegraphed through India or Siberia. It was our school system which they adopted as their model. It was our missionaries who began work among them ten years ahead of those from any other land. The type of Christianity in Japan, as far as it takes on any foreign features, is decidedly ours; and so it is plain that if there is any great mission field of the world which the Lord of the harvest has especially entrusted to American laborers, it is Japan. Since it is the Presbyterians and our old allies of the American Board who have gathered the majority of all the Protestant Christians in that land, to us has been given the foremost place in this work. How, then, may we best signalize the centennial which we this day celebrate? What token of gratitude and love may we most fittingly lay at the feet of our glorious King? I do not undervalue other offerings which have been named. I would not depreciate other enterprises which have been proposed. But, I do say this: if by self-sacrifice, by liberality, by noble endeavor, we would win for our royal Master at this time a trophy worthy of the age in which we live, there is but one way for it: we must gain Japan. Let us rally our churches, as one man, for the effort; let us summon our old comrades of the American Board to pour in their supplies of money and men; yea, let us invoke the aid of all in the United States who love the Lord Jesus Christ. In every great city of Japan and in every hamlet, on the mountain side and in the deep valley, let the Gospel be preached at once to every man, woman and child; then will the Spirit of light and love descend, and a nation will be born in a day.

The triumph which we believe draws near in Japan is but a presage of the result which we are assured will be seen over the whole earth. "This Gospel of the kingdom," says the King himself, "shall be preached in all the world, for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come."

His word is pledged to it. This Foreign Mission work shall be accomplished. The glad tidings of the Saviour shall be preached to every creature. The victorious end shall come. But with us it is left to determine whether that end shall be hastened or whether it shall be deferred. Shall we preach the Gospel at once in all the world unto all nations? Or shall

we by our faithlessness and lethargy hold back the Gospel, and delay the consummate hour? "The end," says the Master. The end of what? The end of this earthly conflict, with all its dust and toil and blood; the end of the sorrow and crying, the end of pain, the end of death. For then the Master will come the second time without sin unto salvation. He will make all things new. With His own light and power and beauty He will fill all things. Fathers and brethren, it matters not here whether we be Pre-millenarians or Post-millenarians, here we are all at one. For every friend of our Lord and Saviour there is but one blessed hope; it is His glorious appearing and the resurrection of the dead. We cast our eyes out over this earth on which we dwell, we see it turned by the curse of sin into one vast cemetery. Among the multitudes who sleep in the dust there are those dear to you who have fallen asleep in Jesus. Those bodies sown in weakness, sown in corruption, sown in dishonor, must lie in the grave till the Gospel has been preached unto all nations—till the end shall come. Here at this hour unlock the chambers of your memory, call up the vanished faces, and you have the high argument of the Foreign Mission work. For myself, standing to-night on this spot, I am encompassed with visions of the past. A little more than fifty years ago from the historic church in this city in which one of the venerable Assemblies now before me last week convened, there went forth a young bride, who made her new and gladsome home in the State of Virginia. Ten years passed, and a mournful procession, in which was a little group of weeping children following the silent form of the mother, who clasped in her arms an infant daughter, hushed like herself in death, came from the State of Virginia back to this city. Almost within a stone's throw of where I now stand the tones of the pastor of the First Church fell on my childish ears, as he invoked for us the consolations of God, and then those beloved forms were borne forth and laid to rest on the beautiful slope of Laurel Hill. And now after so many years I find myself brought back here by the hand of God to plead the cause of the dead, of all the sainted dead of us gathered here in this centennial year, of the sainted dead of all the centuries past. Those bodies which lie in weakness, in corruption, in dishonor, await the day on which they shall come forth arrayed in incorruption, in glory, in power, and amid the splendors of the new heavens and the new earth, they and we shall stand in the presence of our Lord and there shall be fullness of joy. And there shall be no more death, no more sorrow nor crying, no more pain. Oh, what heart must not long for that day! What voice must not pray that it may come quickly!

There is but one thing needed to usher it in. This Gospel of the kingdom must be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations, and then shall the end come. Here in the hundreds of millions who have not heard the name of Christ we see our great task; there in the end we see our reward. Then, by the love we bear to the dead who rest, by the pity we have for the living who wait, by the loyalty we cherish to our King, who died for the world, let every man and every woman now rise to the work. Oh, speed the message of salvation across every ocean, carry it onward to every tribe. Press forward; tell the glad tidings to the next man and the next and the next. Let the wave of life and blessing sweep swiftly over the face of the whole earth, and then the triumphant end is ours.