

# REPORT

OF THE

GENERAL MISSIONARY CONFERENCE,

HELD AT ALLAHABAD,

1872-73.



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WITH A MISSIONARY MAP OF INDIA.

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1873.

## ON PRAYER FOR THE OUTPOURING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

Selection of sub-  
ject.

It will no doubt seem strange to many that one of the great subjects to be discussed, in a Conference of Missionaries and the warmest friends of Missions, is Prayer for the Outpouring of the Holy Spirit on us and on our work. What room is there for discussion on such a topic? Are we not all agreed on it already? Do we not all feel its importance? Are we not all engaged already in prayer for this as *the* blessing which is recognized as the essential pre-requisite to success in our great work? No doubt all present will answer these questions in the affirmative. Such being the state of the case, the difficulty of preparing a paper on that subject which could interest and profit a Conference like this is manifest. Theoretically all seems to be right, practically and experimentally much is probably still needed.

Need of prayer.

Who among us, with any true Missionary spirit animating him, has not felt cheered and encouraged by the assurance that friends and churches, or even small praying circles, remember us in their prayers for the outpouring of the Spirit? And who has not felt stimulated to increased efforts and most earnest prayer by such assurance? Yet how often have these influences upon us proved "as the morning cloud, and as the early dew that passeth away!" Who has not felt the sadly depressing influence of the thought, that friends and churches seem to have forgotten to pray for the power of the Spirit to rest on us, or at least have become cold and formal in their prayers, and left us to struggle alone under a crushing weight of responsibilities, cares, anxieties, and discouragements in the midst of heathen darkness and superstition? And how often has this feeling brought us low before the mercy seat! But alas how short a time has it kept us there! Is it not then manifest that we need much larger measures of the Spirit of grace and of supplications, than we have yet received?

Disappoint-  
ments.

We have no doubt experienced great disappointments in our labors. At times we and our native fellow-laborers have been enabled to set forth the truth with a clearness and demonstration which all the adversaries could not gainsay—and we have looked for great results, and wondered how they could resist such exhibitions of divine truth, and

yet they do resist and remain, even though intellectually convinced, as careless and indifferent as before. Yes, we have seen them grow harder and harder under the sound of the gospel message. The precious facts and doctrines of the cross, which are designed and eminently adapted to melt the hardest heart, and bow the most stubborn will, pass by them like their own idle tales, or result only in hardening their hearts, searing their consciences, and ripening them for destruction. How is all this to be accounted for, but that we need "the power of the Holy Ghost coming upon us?" We need still to "tarry in Jerusalem, until we be endued with power from on high."

Resisting the  
Gospel Message.

We have seen men enlightened in the knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus, and heard them confess their convictions of that truth, and that Jesus is an all-sufficient and the only Saviour of sinners. They seemed to be just at the door of the kingdom, and ready to enter in, and there, as it were looking in at the open door of the kingdom, we have seen them weep as they were pressed to take the last decided step and enter in. All that man could do seemed to have been done, and still they there stood and hesitated and could not yet take the last step. They had come all the way from the darkest and most degrading idolatry and superstition, but could not be induced by all our reasoning and all our persuasion to take one step more. Felix like them wanted a more convenient time. How it has made us weep and cry to God for the converting power of the Holy Spirit! And yet we have seen them go away and become ten-fold more the children of hell than before. The evil spirit has taken to him seven spirits worse than himself; and returned, and finding the house he had left empty, swept and garnished, they all enter in and dwell there. Had we been endued with the promised power from on high, how many such might have been saved.

Inquirers.

Probably most of us who have seen some years in the Missionary work, have become acquainted with deeply interesting cases of what seemed to be true conversion. The social standing of such persons, their talents, their education, and, above all, their Christian spirit have been such as to afford the highest promise of usefulness. But we have seen them grow cold, careless, neglectful, inconsistent, immoral; and finally return to the world like the dog to his vomit, or the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire. All this we have watched, with deep anxiety. We have "warned and reprov'd and exhorted with all long-suffering and doc-

Backsliders.

trine," and have wrestled in prayer for such, and still their progress, with but slight alterations between good and evil, has been downwards to final and hopeless ruin. O how much our churches and all their members need the outpouring of the Holy Spirit! Have we been suitably impressed with such a desire of this need, as to lead us to united, earnest, persevering prayer for it?

Need of the Holy Spirit.

From this brief review of our work and our position, nothing can be clearer than our deep and pressing need of an abundant outpouring of the Holy Spirit on us, on our churches and converts, and on the world of heathenism, infidelity and atheism around us. And this furnishes us with our first argument for earnest and persevering prayer for the outpouring of the Spirit. Of ourselves we are helpless, we can accomplish absolutely nothing without it. We are as unworthy as we are helpless. Our case is desperate. We can neither make a step in advance in the Divine life ourselves, nor lead others a step in that direction, without the guidance and influence of the Holy Spirit. Then our only resource left is prayer. Let us humble ourselves before God, and cry mightily unto him, peradventure he will hear us and grant deliverance.

Promises.

To this we are encouraged by the invitations and promises of God's own word. If we are straightened in this matter, we are straightened in ourselves, not in God. For he has graciously assured us, that he is more ready to give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him, than earthly parents are to give good things to their children.

Answers.

And God has verified the truth and faithfulness of this assurance by his Providences in answering prayer. How long have God's people been crying, O Lord how long! How have our Fathers wrestled in prayer that an effectual door to the nations might be opened for his Gospel, and how have our eyes been blessed to see what glorious answers he has already given, and is still giving to their and our prayers. Almost the entire world is open now to the Gospel. He has heard prayer and poured out his Spirit and raised up a mighty army of his servants to go forth with the everlasting Gospel, conquering and to conquer the nations of the earth. What does all this mean, but that God is now seated on the throne of mercy, waiting to be gracious to us, encouraging us to make large our requests. Every answer to prayer furnishes us with a legitimate argument to be employed before him in pleading for more and larger blessings. We cannot exhaust the fountain.

Let us not fear lest we make too large draughts from it—our needs are great, and we have a world to bear on the arms of our faith before the throne of grace.

But has the time to favor Zion, yea the set time, has it come? Yes, verily, for we already see the signs predicted. The set time come. “For thy servants take pleasure in her stones, and favor the dust thereof,” “so the heathen shall fear the name of the Lord, and all the kings of the earth thy glory.” We now see the fulfilment of these predictions in progress before our eyes. How can we doubt that it is time for Zion to arise and shine, and for all her citizens to unite in calling on God to arise and have mercy upon Zion!

Again, we are in the dispensation of the Spirit—that dispensation, or time in which God has promised to pour out his Spirit on all flesh. Dispensation of the Spirit. “And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions; and also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my Spirit. And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood and fire and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness and the moon into blood, before the great and terrible day of the Lord come.” The Hebrew word *akhir* in this passage, the same in form and signification as we find in Arabic, Persian, and Urdu, is translated by the Apostle Peter, under the teaching of the Holy Spirit, by “the last days.” And he there tells us that what God had promised by the mouth of Joel to do in “*the last days*,” he had then begun to perform. And he repeats the limit of these last days in which this wonderful outpouring of the Spirit is to occur. It is “before the great and notable day of the Lord come.” The outpouring of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost was not the complete and final fulfilment of the promise. It was *in* fulfilment of the promise; but in itself was but the *earnest* of the full blessing. And being poured out upon “devout men, out of every nation under Heaven,” it became an earnest and pledge of the fulness of the blessing to come upon every nation—even upon all flesh. Representatively the Spirit was on the day of Pentecost poured out upon all nations, but the literal fulfilment of the promise remains to be prayed for by us. We are living in the dispensation in which this blessing is to be granted. It must come in all its fulness “before the great and notable day of the Lord come.”

Proofs.

That this is true, is manifest from the words of the promise, and of the interpretation of these words given by an inspired Apostle. It is further confirmed by the fact that God has heard the prayers of his people, and largely poured out his Spirit both on his church and on the world, and is still doing so. Who can tell the number, or estimate the preciousness of the Revivals of pure and undefiled religion, which God in our own day has given in answer to the prayers of his people. The simple fact, that God does thus hear the prayers of his people, and pour out his Spirit for the conversion of sinners, and for the sanctification and comfort of his own people, is proof that the time has come for us to ask and to receive this greatest of all blessings, the gift of the author of all spiritual good. Yet are there not many who practically say, the time is not come, the time that the Lord's house should be built, who run every one to his own house. Let us not forget the extent of the promised blessing. It is not confined to one nation, or kindred, or tribe, to one denomination of Christians, or to the people of one language or another, but it is literally for *all flesh*. Now if a partial union of God's people in prayer so manifestly secures that blessing upon a portion of those to whom it was promised, is it not fair to infer, nay is it not a necessary inference, that the cordial union of all God's people in earnest persevering prayer, would at the same time secure the outpouring of the promised Spirit literally on all flesh?

"Week of Prayer."  
er."

What answer do God's dealings with his people give to this question? The first "week of prayer" for this blessing, observed in an obscure chamber in Jerusalem, was answered by a day of Pentecost. Judging from what God then gave in answer to the prayers of that little company for one week, what might they not have reasonably expected to receive from the same source, had all the church from that day forward continued with one accord in prayers and supplications for this blessing. So of our modern "week of prayer." The expressed object of the first appointment of that week, was to pray for the outpouring of the Spirit on all flesh. And for the first two or three years while that object was kept prominently in view, what mighty results followed, in the outpourings of the Spirit in almost every land where prayer was offered. And that too even while multitudes who bore the Christian name, held back from all participation in the exercises of that week. Had the whole church of Christ, as one soul, united in that world-encircling con-

cert of prayer, and enveloped the globe with one great thick cloud of incense coming up, perfumed by the blood of Jesus, before the Lord God of Sabaoth, and had they continued thus to persevere in pressing their suit before the mercy seat, who of us can believe that the world would have continued to this day as it is. Who can believe that with such a spirit of prayer in the whole church, we should have so often to repeat the sad lamentation, "Lord who hath believed our report, and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?" Can any conclusion be more legitimate, from these promises, than that it is now time for us, for the whole church of the living God, to arise as one man, and call upon God in the name of Christ with one heart and one soul, that he would now fulfil his own most gracious promise, to pour out his Spirit on us and upon all flesh? Brethren, what do we here in this Conference? Of what avail will be all our deliberations, our plans, our resolutions, our labors, if the Spirit be not poured out upon us and on our labors, can we convert a soul? Can we advance the kingdom of Christ one step in this land by all the combined wisdom, learning and power, that we may bring to bear on our work? Can we move one slumbering soul, until we be endued with power from on high, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon us? Brethren, our work is to go forth among the dead, and cry unto them, "live." But can they hear our cry? Can they live, until the breath of the life-giving Spirit quicken their dead souls? We may preach to the dry bones, that are very dry. We may hear the noise of bone coming to bone. We may see the flesh and the skin come upon them, but they are nothing but dead corpses still. They may look life-like, even beautiful, but they are beautiful only in death. There is no life in them yet. No, nor will be, until we prophesy unto the winds, *i. e.*, pray for the outpouring of the Spirit to blow upon these slain that they may live. If this be a correct interpretation of that part of Ezekiel's vision, we have in it our warrant and command from God to pray for the outpouring of the Spirit upon all to whom the Gospel is preached. But let us pray in the simplicity of the faith of the little child, who, when the family were about starting to church to pray for rain, called for the umbrella. "Why child," said her mother, "what do you want of the umbrella?" "Why, mamma," replied the child, "I thought we were going to pray for rain." Yes, Brethren, when we go to pray for a blessing, let us go

Ezekiel's vision.

Pray in faith.

thus prepared to receive it. When we go to pray for rain, let us not forget to take our umbrellas with us.

Christ's parting  
command.

As an additional warrant for united, earnest prayer for this blessing, let us briefly consider the import of Christ's parting command to his disciples. He "commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which ye have heard of me." But two questions are suggested by this command. How were they to wait, and for what? What was that promise of the Father which he had communicated to them? Both these questions are answered in the succeeding narratives. How were they to wait? How did they wait? "These all continued with one accord with prayer and supplication," until "the day of Pentecost was fully come," and found them still "all with one accord in one place." They all with one accord waited on God in earnest prayer and supplication, and persevered in so doing, until the blessing came. This is the answer to the first question. May we all go and do likewise.

The promise of  
the Father.

What was the promise of the Father which Christ had communicated to them? "The Comforter, the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." "And when he is come he will convince the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment." This blessing they did receive while waiting on God with one accord in prayer and supplications. And this Peter says was the blessing promised by the Father. And the results were just what Christ had promised. They were endued with power from on high. They went forth and preached with tongues of fire, and their preaching was "in demonstration of the Spirit and of power." How instructive is the programme of this first "week of prayer," and how encouraging its results. Here is no frittering away a whole week in praying for a long catalogue of temporal blessings, intermingled with some of a spiritual character. The programme of that "week of prayer" contained but one item, the Holy Spirit, but that item was so comprehensive that it included all other blessings for which we may pray. They did not stand a distance, and day after day ask God to dole out of them this blessing and that. No, they came boldly up to the fountain and pleaded God's own promise for the gift of his own Spirit, and they received what they asked for and all spiritual blessings with it.

Results.

In reference to our modern "week of prayer," the first



proposal for it was based on the apostolic programme and prompted by the teachings of the Apostolic week of prayer. <sup>Apostolic programme.</sup> It too contained but one item, the all-comprehensive item of its Apostolic model, prayer for the outpouring of the Spirit on all flesh, that all the ends of the earth might see the salvation of our God. And God answered our prayers in measure, as he did those which preceded the day of Pentecost. And in doing so he set the seal of his approbation on it and thereby gave every encouragement to all his people to unite with one accord in pressing that suit before the mercy seat.

This modern "week of prayer" has been observed extensively, not universally, in every country where there are true Christians to prayer. But has it answered our expectations? If it has, our expectations have dishonored the promises on which our prayers were based. Let our prayers and our expectations be not only based on the promise but moulded to it, and then see if the result will not be in conformity to the promise. Do you ask why have we not after twelve years seen any greater results from this union in prayer? Only compare the programme of the first "week of prayer," or of its modern copy, with those of the last ten years. In some of them there has been no more allusion to the Holy Spirit, the promise of the Father for which Christ directed his disciples to wait in Jerusalem, than if we had no further need of his presence or power. In others merely a part of one day's programme calls for prayer for the outpouring of the Spirit on the church. Can any one pretend that this comes up to the promise of the Father to pour out his Spirit on all flesh, or can we wonder that, when we refuse to ask for what God has told us to ask and promised to give, he should refuse to give what we in our superior wisdom choose to ask? "If ye abide in me and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will and it shall be done unto you." We have asked and have received only in part, because his words have not so abode in us that we have asked in accordance with their teaching. "Ask and ye shall receive that your joy may be full." But let us ask in accordance with the will of God as revealed unto us by his Spirit in his word. Let us open our mouths wide for he has promised to fill them. And what he has promised he is able also to perform. Why then should not the whole church of the living God, now unite as with one heart and one soul in prayer that God would pour out his Spirit on all flesh? Should this Conference be owned and blessed of God in arousing

all his people throughout the world thus to pray, it will be a glorious success, even though it should accomplish nothing else.

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### Forenoon Session.

#### CONFERENCE ARRANGEMENTS.

**Arrangements.** THE Conference met at ten A.M., presided over by the Rev. Dr. MORRISON, A. P. M., Umballa.

**Rev. Dr. Newton's absence.** Dr. Morrison stated that the Rev. Dr. Newton, A. P. M., Lahore, had been requested to preside at the organization of the Conference; but that owing to serious and protracted indisposition, he was unable to be present. The duty therefore devolved upon himself as Chairman of the Committee of Arrangements.

After devotional exercises, the Chairman remarked in substance as follows:—

**Chairman's opening address.**

When the proposition for this Conference first came before the Synod of India,\* it was taken up with no little doubt and hesitancy. And when a Committee was appointed, it was to correspond with missionaries in different parts of India, in order to ascertain their views and feelings with regard to the expediency of calling such a Conference. That correspondence developed so little interest in the subject, that the Committee felt far from sanguine as to the results of such a call, and yet there was in their opinion interest enough developed to justify the call that was afterwards issued. Still, even when the arrangements had approached near to completion, grave doubts as to its success rested on many minds. But what do our eyes behold? So far as numbers are concerned, it is a success even beyond the largest expectations of the most sanguine. For this God be praised. And I am sure I express the sentiments of every one of my brethren of the Missions concerned in issuing the call in tendering to you all our most cordial welcome to this place. And may the Spirit of God rest upon us all, directing all our deliberations and influencing all our intercourse with each other, so that we may all find it good to be here, and that a rich blessing from above may rest upon us, so that great good to man and glory to God may flow from our meeting.

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\* Of the Presbyterian Church of the United States.