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REV. MR. WHITE'S SERMON.

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The Genius and Moral Achievements of the Spirit of
Foreign Missions.

A

S E R M O N

PREACHED IN THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH,

JOHN'S ISLAND, S. C.

DECEMBER 18, 1836.

BY REV. ELIPHA WHITE,
PASTOR.

BOSTON:
PRINTED BY CROCKER & BREWSTER.
47 Washington Street.

1837.

This sermon, with a few alterations, preached to the John's Island and Wadmalaw Presbyterian Church and Congregation, which responded in the annexed resolutions, was originally designed, according to appointment, for the last anniversary of the Southern Board of Foreign Missions, to which it is now respectfully dedicated,

BY THE AUTHOR.



S E R M O N .

HEBREWS x, 9.

Lo, I come to do thy will, O God.

THE spirit of this would have carried our Saviour through any suffering, in the accomplishment of the will of heaven. It was the same that led him to the cross, a sacrifice for man's redemption; than which a purer spirit never animated the bosom of God himself.

A kindred spirit led the prophet Isaiah, whose hallowed lips had been touched with a live coal from off the altar, to say, "Here am I; send me." He was ready to go wherever sent, in the accomplishment of the designs of heaven, to meliorate the condition of his fellow-men.

The same spirit was inculcated by our Lord in his last command to the Apostles, saying, "Go, and teach all nations to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." Nor were they backward in the fulfilment of this command.

Not unlike this was the spirit that carried martyrs through persecution, dungeons, torture, flames and death itself, in the spread of the blessings of salvation. They loved God more than they feared their tormentors, or even the king of terrors, and went forward in the work assigned them to do.

A similar spirit has animated the good and pious of every succeeding age, to the present period. They have ever been ready to say, "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God;" "Here am I; send me;" or to "Go and preach the gospel,"—send it to the destitute.

And this is the very *spirit* of missions. Your attention, then, may be directed to the *genius* and *moral achievements* of the *spirit* of *foreign missions*.

A subject that has been opposed as chimerical, and even absurd. Nor has this opposition been confined to the mere worldling and open infidel; but it is felt, and sometimes manifested, by professing Christians. Of such, however, it should be said in charity, they are not well informed, or act under a wrong impression; for we can hardly conceive it possible, that an enlightened Christian, of benevolent feelings, should be opposed to the spirit of their Lord and Saviour, prophets, apostles, martyrs and Christians generally.

The opposition of others is natural—what we are ever to expect. They either deny the reality of religion, and deem it absurd to urge its

claims ; or love themselves and their possessions, and those around, more than the destitute of heathen lands and foreign climes. They oppose, therefore, every effort to send the gospel abroad.

Regardless of opposition, however, we are to contemplate,

I. The Genius of the Spirit of Foreign Missions. Unlike the spirit of the world, it leads to nothing unworthy and doubtful. The genius of the religion of Pagans, leads to scenes of wickedness and deeds of iniquity ; journies fatiguing and of doubtful result ; personal sufferings and death itself. That of the religion of Mahometans, to warlike deeds of valor, and long pilgrimages to Mecca : and that of the religion of Jews, to boasted works and numerous ceremonies ; while the genius of the religion of Christians—the spirit of foreign missions—is humble, peaceable, long-suffering, persevering and overpowering.

It is *humble*. Though ennobling in itself, and leading to works of infinite magnitude, attended with success unparalleled, like its author, the meek and lowly Jesus, it claims no earthly honor and feels no unhallowed pride. Its triumph over the hearts of individuals, communities and whole nations, excites no proud, ambitious feelings. Amidst the honors of victory and the joys of pardoned sinners, the spirit of foreign missions remains humble. No success, no communicated good,

and no promised reward, can divest it of humility. This is its genius.

To engage, then, successfully in the cause of missions, we must be humble. Pride and ambition accords not with the employment. Yet humble hearts and hallowed feelings may engage with God, angels and Christians, in man's redemption. Nor may ought deprive us of success, while our hearts beat in unison with the spirit of our work.

It is *peaceable*. Though it destroys the peace of many, and excites the enmity of every heathen, peace is the genius of the spirit of foreign missions. It breathes not a breath of opposition; cherishes not a hostile feeling, and manifests no warlike action. In all its movements the very spirit of peace is seen. "Peace on earth, and good will to men," announced the arrival of the first foreign missionary to our world. Nor has the spirit, brought from the skies, forsaken the cause he thus espoused. He loves it still, and will love it to the end, till peace reigns through the abodes of men.

Nor may we destroy it. But, with the peace of pardoned sin in our bosoms, peace with our fellow-men, and peace with heaven, we may engage in the work of the Prince of Peace, and send the gospel to the heathen. It would be a happy coincidence of feeling with the genius of the spirit of missions.

It is *long-suffering*. Though trials new and many arise, and discouragements attend the effort, the spirit of foreign missions patiently endures every evil. Though the missionary abroad prove unfaithful ; though he sicken and die in an unhealthy clime ; or though he be destroyed by the unfeeling cannibal, the evil is borne with submission. Though false religions persecute ; evil governments interfere ; and missionaries are driven from their stations, it must be endured without a murmur. For long-suffering is the spirit of missions. Its genius sustains it under every discouragement.

To encounter trial, then, with composure, is necessary to such employment. We may not hope to engage in it without suffering evils. And we must endure them as good soldiers of the cross. It is thus only that we come up to the genius of our work.

It is *persevering*. No evils, great or lasting, subdue entirely the spirit of missions. It perseveres to the end. Obstacles are thus removed ; facilities discovered ; and, ultimately, the end will be attained. For

It is *overpowering*. Nothing may successfully resist the spirit of all grace. It will finally triumph over the hearts of men. Though long resisted, disappointments interpose, and success seem doubtful, the final result is most certain ; the genius of the spirit of foreign missions is overpowering. It is sustained by the Eternal, who has

promised to subdue the kingdoms of this world to the dominion of his Son. Certain, then, as the promise of Jehovah is immutable, is the result of foreign missions.

And, successfully to engage in the work, we must be possessed of an unwavering belief in this ; and persevere to its full accomplishment. Nothing may shake our confidence in God, or the end proposed, while we pursue our course with fixed resolution, in accordance with the genius of the spirit of missions.

Thus humbly and peaceably, with persevering patience and subduing energy, the spirit of foreign missions moves forward in the accomplishment of the will of heaven.

II. The moral achievements of the spirit of foreign missions. Differing from those of Egypt, Assyria, Persia, Greece and Rome of ancient fame, and those of modern date in France, Russia, England and America, they are not immortalized in the poet's song, or orator's theme ; the conqueror's triumphal arch, or hero's wreath of fame ; the walled city, or the immortal guard ; the marble monument, or the catacomb of the dead : but are not less visible, useful and durable in the promise to the fallen parents of the human family ; the removal of Israel to the land of Canaan ; the advent, suffering, and death of Christ ; the course of apostles ; the struggle of martyrs ; the work of reformers, and the recent effort of Christian benevolence.

No sooner had the first parents of the human family fallen from their state of rectitude in Eden, and raised the standard of earth's rebellion, than the spirit of missions achieved a moral wonder in *the promise of man's redemption*. Though confined, at that period, to the skies, it was a spirit of foreign enterprise that thus guaranteed a Saviour to the fallen inhabitants of this revolted province. Had heaven never promised to send a missionary from above, to teach the sons and daughters of Adam the way back to Eden on high, they must have remained outcasts from the favor of God forever. But, happy for them and us, the spirit of missions reigns in heaven. Wonderful moral achievement of enduring praise was the promise of God to fallen man. It lighted up a smile of joy in the prospect of woe, and rendered earth, cursed of the Almighty, an abode of peace to the humble. Its happy effects are still felt; nor will they cease while the happiness of man is worthy of heaven.

The removal of Israel to the land of promise was, also, an achievement of kindred spirit. They were the chosen of the Lord, embracing the few who honored him and lived for heaven. They were, therefore, taken from their limited sphere of action and sent, not as individual missionaries, but a nation, to teach the will of heaven, and diffuse the blessings of salvation. Egypt they left, and forty years wandered in the wilderness, till they

received their commission, and were prepared to pass over Jordan. Then to Canaan they went, and taught the heathen the way of life through the promised Messiah, Jesus Christ; and, in anticipation of his coming, they were long preparing to receive him; though, as a temporal king, he did not fail to make provision for their eternal salvation. Nor was the achievement of their deliverance from Egypt and conquest of Canaan less the effect of the spirit of missions, than though they had fully understood the gospel plan of redemption. They were the pioneers in the work of saving men; and, though ignorant of the true character of Christ, they were still the messengers of mercy to the heathenish idolator. Their influence on the heathen and the world was a moral achievement of infinite moment. Nor will it cease to be admired while the song of the redeemed is chanted.

Another achievement still greater, and never to be forgotten, was witnessed in *the advent, suffering and death of Christ*. It looked back to the first promise of a Saviour in the garden; and forward through all coming time; was originally attended by a heavenly choir; then called forth the sympathies of the pious; and finally rent rocks and veiled the sun in darkness. Nature could not behold the stupendous work without a heaving bosom. Earth was clothed in mourning, though it was the world's last hope. But for this, man might have rallied around the standard of rebellion,

and gloried in his wickedness forever ; heaven had never been attained, and all happiness must have been denied. Noble achievement ! Ever-enduring praise to him who thus achieved the work of man's redemption. Spirit of missions ! what hast thou done for revolted, fallen man ? A messenger from the skies alone could have achieved so much by suffering and death. To the spirit of missions and the God of glory be all the praise.

Still another achievement, of increasing importance, was witnessed in *the course of the apostles*. They followed the example of him who had laid down his life for men, and went about doing good. Nor were they restrained from their course by mockings, cruel scourging, imprisonment, or torture. They were moved by none of these things ; pursued their course in spreading far and wide the news of salvation. Nor were there any of the then known world to whom they did not preach Christ, and him crucified. To their influence and example the world is indebted for much of its enjoyment. Nor will the importance of their course ever cease to be felt. It was a moral achievement worthy of the apostles of our Lord Jesus. And it was effected by the spirit of foreign missions. Worthy example ! Happy effect of the spirit of missions !

The struggle of martyrs, for the spread of the gospel and the salvation of men, was another achievement of equal moment. For it was

through them that the religion of Christ rode out the storm of ten persecutions, and the gathering darkness of twelve centuries. They bled and died; but their spirit was caught by those who followed, and the light of heaven was thus preserved amidst the darkness with which the world was overspread. A moral achievement worthy of the better days of Christianity; and that reflects immortal honor on the martyr, who, with the spirit of his Master, endured every hardship, and persevered in doing good to the end.

Again, *the work of reformers* was an achievement of the spirit of missions. They went to the work with the humility, peace and fixed resolution characteristic of heaven's messengers. Nor would they be driven from the work assigned them to do. They persevered, through opposition and suffering, to the accomplishment of their undertaking. And, through them, light again beamed on the world; ignorance, superstition and idolatry rolled back upon the darkness of the past, and new scenes and brighter prospects opened before them. It seemed like a world waking from the slumber of ages. The spirit of missions was abroad in the earth, and reformers achieved wonders.

The last achievement of the spirit of foreign missions is witnessed in *the recent efforts of Christian benevolence*. These efforts commenced with the present century, and are now being made more successfully. Already have they dissipated the

gloom of former times, and cheered the desponding hopes of those sitting in darkness. Wherever extended, men are becoming more civilized. They feel more the importance of their being, the dignity of their natures, and the responsibilities of their stations. The claims of society are understood, the rights of civil government are acknowledged, and the requisitions of heaven are felt to be binding. And thus new restraints are imposed, society improved, and civilization advanced,—as appears among the savage Indians of the West, in the Islands of the Pacific, at Sierra Leone and the Cape of Good Hope, on the Island of Ceylon, in the Burman Empire, and wherever the missionary of the cross has taught the religion of Christ. Never has man advanced in civilization with equal rapidity as since these efforts of Christian benevolence. They have given a new spring to life, and civil society is advancing.

These efforts are also increasing literary attainments; have added much to the literature of the age. They have made new discoveries in almost every branch of science, and new attainments in whatever is useful. There is scarcely a region of our globe that Christian missionaries have not explored. They have travelled sea and land; brought into requisition the resources of the deep and the mines of the earth; surveyed the river to its source, the inlet, gulf and lake; wandered on plains, through valleys, over mountains and amidst

forests; dwelt in cities and villages, and among wandering savages; received the hospitality of the great, and partaken of the morsel of squalid wretchedness. And from each source have drawn information to increase our literature. Nor is the literary world sufficiently aware of its obligations to the humble, persevering, benevolent efforts of Christians.

Further, they are raising the female character. A surer index to the spread of religion may not, perhaps, be found, than the estimation in which females are held. It is the Christian religion only that has raised them to the rank for which they were designed. In no age and no nation, where the religion of Jesus has not prevailed, have they ranked as equals. Even now, in heathen nations, they are little more than servants; while, in every Christian land, they are equals, companions, friends. But their characters are rising in the estimation of heathens; even where they were once degraded and neglected, they are now respected, and will soon be highly estimated; as in Turkey, Hindoostan and the Sandwich Islands. And it is Christian benevolence that has wrought this change, and will carry it forward, till male and female are one in the Lord, and companions of equal worth. Happy result! most sensibly felt by those oppressed.

Again, by these efforts the standard of morality is elevated. Already have they effected much,

and will ultimately raise it to the fixed standard of heaven, the word of God. Men will be brought to feel that there is but one standard of moral action, the will of heaven ; a result that Christians themselves are more fully to understand, and that all are to acknowledge. They are beginning to feel that men are responsible, and must be moral. Nor is this feeling without its influence. They are more circumspect in their walk and conversation, more upright in their dealings, and more observant of the forms of religion ; as appears among the truly pious in our own land, and the more enlightened of every other. And this may be traced to the spreading influence of religious truth—benevolent, Christian effort.

Finally, these efforts promote the piety and happiness of mankind. Though fallen and degraded, men may be renewed and exalted ; and, so far as brought under the influence of the spirit of missions, they are pious and happy. Their feelings and sympathies are brought into unison with the pure and holy ; and their happiness is necessarily promoted. Nor is this a doubtful result of the influence of benevolent efforts. They promote the piety and happiness of those engaged in the work, and of all who feel their influence. And, as these are increasing, they must ultimately be felt through the world ; piety and happiness will be extended to the heathen of Europe, Asia, Africa and America—all mankind.

Thus, in benevolent efforts, the spirit of foreign missions is civilizing, enlightening, elevating, moralizing and Christianizing the whole world. Nor will it cease its efforts, till "the kingdom and dominion, and greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven be given to the people of the saints of the Most High," and all nations, kindreds, tongues and people submissive yield to the will of the Eternal.

Glorious achievements! Extending back to the fall—forward to the close of time,—around to all—and up to heaven! Worthy of the *spirit of foreign missions!* Worthy! respond the fallen of Eden; the favorites of Canaan; the weeping of Calvary; chosen apostles; bleeding martyrs; persecuted reformers, and Christians universally. Enduring monuments of praise to the *moral achievements* of the spirit of foreign missions.

In view of this subject we learn, first, that the work of foreign missions brings into action the noblest principles and best feelings of man. Only that which is high and ennobling accords with the genius of its spirit; and, possessed of this, our feelings must be pure and elevated; they must sympathize with the sorrows and wants of the destitute; the good will and holy aspirations of the pious; the hallowed devotions of sainted spirits, and the love of God himself. And what feelings are more worthy? Whose bosoms are warmed

and animated with emotions purer? Naught this side perfection infinite surpass feelings thus pure and exalted. They are the best of which we are susceptible.

Nor are the principles involved less dignified and noble. They are the principles that govern heaven and achieve wonders—the grand principles of the gospel, that led Christ through suffering and death in the work of redemption; carried apostles and martyrs through persecution and flames, and now conduct Christians over seas and lands to foreign shores and heathen climes. They are the ground work of personal piety and benevolent action; and nothing worthy of Christians and acceptable to God flows from any other. While engaged, therefore, in the work, and with the spirit of missions, we are actuated by the noblest principles—pure, holy, exalted principles of true piety and expansive benevolence.

And with these principles and feelings we attain the dignity of acknowledged worth and conscious happiness—the highest attainment of man. No earthly attainment can raise him to a higher moral elevation. An elevation from which he looks out on the extended field of wickedness that employs all the energies of his benevolence and the sympathies of his soul. And thus the direct and reflex influence of the work of foreign missions is beneficial in developing the better feelings and strengthening the noblest principles of man.

We also learn, secondly, that all narrow, selfish and sectarian views and interests are forever excluded from the work of foreign missions. They are at variance with the genius of its spirit, and can never harmonize with the work. However zealous we may appear, or whatever sacrifices we may make, while influenced by contracted views and selfish motives, we are destitute of the spirit of missions, and may never share in the rewards of its triumph. It would rob Christ, the first missionary, of the cross, who came to do the will of his Father, and all others, prophets, apostles, martyrs and Christians, who have followed his example, of their glory.

There is no unworthy party object to be attained by this work. It is above all parties, except the party of the redeemed, whose plans embrace the salvation of all in the reign of righteousness; plans that a single sectarian would forever frustrate. His limited views, partial feelings and selfish interests would shut the avenues of his bosom to righteousness complete, and hold its reign over the world in doubtful suspense. Nor might the kingdoms and dominions of the earth be claimed for the saints of the Most High, while spirits such were found among its ranks. Their pride must be subdued, their souls enlarged, and their plans harmonized with those of heaven, ere the work of foreign missions is accomplished.

Thus excluded is every unhallowed motive and party feeling. They are denied an interest in the work. It is too sacred for their unhallowed touch—too heavenly for such a spirit. The spirit of earth may never mingle in the work of Christ. Deceive not yourself; party zeal is not the love of souls—the spirit of missions.

Again, thirdly, we learn that Christians of every denomination may cordially and harmoniously unite in the work of foreign missions irrespective of their ecclesiastical peculiarities. The great leading principles of the gospel, necessary to salvation, are generally embraced by all the different denominations of Christians; and their peculiarities almost uniformly consist in some of the non-essentials of religion. Right or wrong, therefore, in their ecclesiastical forms and ceremonies—distinctive features, they may cordially and harmoniously unite on the principles common to all, in saving the world. Nor is it necessary to this that they should loose their identity, or even relinquish their attachment to a single peculiarity. They may retain their favorite names, and all their characteristics, while they combine their energies in the work of foreign missions.

This requires nothing but truth—*saving* truth—mutually embraced, and the means of communicating it to the destitute. Means and truth that all must employ, and that may (under the influence of the Holy Spirit) prove effectual to their

salvation. Nothing, therefore, is essential to this union that unchristians any denomination, or even robs it of a single peculiar characteristic.

Why, then, should Christians of different names refuse to unite in the work of foreign missions? Why divide their energies, exhaust their funds, expend their time, and alienate their affections in separate action? Are they not responsible for the increased labor and expense? And are not thousands of perishing heathen thus denied the means of salvation? Those necessary to sustain different organizations would be sufficient to send the gospel to whole nations. They are heavy drafts upon the benevolence of Christians, ministerial labors, and the treasury of the Lord. Nor may they be drawn and honored without responsibility. A responsibility that Christians should duly estimate. They are answerable to God and the souls of men; and to them they must give an account.

Fourthly, we further learn the presumptuous and hazardous course of the enemies of foreign missions. Presumptuous, because there is no hope of success. They may never stop its progress. Hazardous, because it may be attended with ruin. They may be crushed in their opposition. The cause they oppose is the cause of heaven. It has enlisted the sympathies of Christians; and God, himself, is pledged to carry it forward. Nor will he fail to accomplish his purpose and give the world to his Son for an inheritance.

How unequal the contest! What folly and madness for man thus to contend with his Maker! Does he hope to succeed against the Almighty? Has he no sympathy for souls immortal? Would he roll back the tide of benevolence, and overwhelm those, for whom Christ died, in ruin? Presumption indeed! And still more hazardous! Shame, confusion, and everlasting contempt must be the result!

And, finally, we learn the zeal and fixedness of purpose with which its friends should hasten the accomplishment of a work so glorious. They have nought to fear—success is certain. Though clouds and darkness are round about it; though providence seem to frown for the moment, and though Christians become disheartened, they will still pray and labor for it; providence will again smile upon it, and God almighty will support it. What have its friends to fear? Why should they delay?

Begin anew, with new zeal and fixed purpose; nor let the cause languish for want of aid. Sixty missionaries recently waited the order of the American churches. Some have already gone at their bidding, and are now borne on the waves of the ocean to their destined stations among the heathen. Others wait your further order, and will go at a moment's warning.

But will you send them from their homes, their friends and their country without the means to

feed and clothe them? They ask no more. Their possessions, their lives and their all are sacredly devoted to God and foreign missions. Give them the plainest food (not the delicacies of *your* board) and they will labor hard, and, if need be, die on heathen shores—with no pillow to rest their weary heads; no friend to soothe their troubled bosoms, and no soft hand to wipe away the cold sweat of death. It is enough that Jesus is with them, and they are accounted worthy to labor, and suffer, and die in his cause.

Friends of the Redeemer, what will you give them? What will you do for the cause of foreign missions? Could I obtain from *this* and every other church in the land, a respond—*six hundred dollars annually, to support a missionary*—those hungering for the bread of life would soon enjoy the blessing, and every Christian on earth, and all heaven exclaim, Amen.

The respond of the John's Island and Wadmalaw church and congregation, to the above sermon, will be found in the following preamble and resolutions :—

“ Sensible of our obligations to Christ and his religion for most of our present enjoyments, and all our future hopes—and, whereas, many of our fellow-creatures in heathen lands and of other climes are destitute of these blessings; and, whereas, Christ hath commanded his disciples to send the gospel to every creature, therefore,

“ *Resolved*, That we, the members and supporters of the John's Island and Wadmalaw Presbyterian Church and Society, will furnish the sum of six hundred dollars annually for the next five years, or while Providence shall favor us with the means to support a missionary of the gospel among the heathen.

“ *Resolved*, That the sum of six hundred dollars, raised in accordance with the above resolution, be and it hereby is appropriated to the support of the Rev. J. Leighton Wilson, at Cape Palmas, in Africa.

“ *Resolved*, That this money, and a copy of these resolutions, be transmitted to the Treasurer of the Southern Board of Foreign Missions, with a request to forward the same to the above missionary, through the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions; also, that the above preamble and resolutions be published in the Charleston Observer.

THOMAS LEGARE, *Chairman.*

KINSEY BURDEN, JR., *Secretary.*”