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ART. I.—THE EVIDENTIAL VALUE OF MODERN
MISSIONS.

AT a time like the present, when a wave of interest in foreign missionary work, and of the spirit of personal devotion to the Lord's service in the foreign field, is a conspicuous fact in English Christendom, it may be specially timely to review one important aspect of the great missionary enterprise—its aspect as a verifiable fulfilment of Scripture predictions, and as an evidence accordingly of the Faith.

We review, in the inquiry, a series of facts—immovable facts of human history; things each of them solid in itself, and the whole a group, a chain, impossible to break from its significant connection. Our discussion of the phenomenon must be brief, and of course inadequate; but it will be something to have invited the attention of the reader to it for himself.

Dr. Theodore Christlieb, of Bonn, in his able little book on the present state of Protestant Missions, remarks that “we need Missions more and more, to confirm the truth of the promises of Scripture, and thus to repel the attacks on the Divine Word.” Most true; and let us bring the truth out a little into the light by the help of a brief study of a certain verse of the Galatian Epistle, iii. 8: “The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the Gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed.” I do not propose to discuss these pregnant phrases in detail, lingering, for example, over the specimen here given of the Apostle's view of the spiritual vitality, the almost personality, of the written Word—such that he can say that the Scripture *foresaw* the plan of God. Nor will we now attempt to follow out the deep suggestion of the passage in respect of the primary

work of Missions; namely, that they are meant to carry over the world not civilization, nor secular amelioration, nor natural religion, as their distinctive message, but *justification by faith*; that is to say, the Gospel of the propitiatory Cross and the regenerating Spirit. I call attention now solely to the prophetic bearing and burthen of the passage. It speaks of a great Hope linked with the name of Abraham—with that name, and not another. And that Hope it is of which we claim to see the supernatural but tangible fulfilment under our eyes to-day in the great phenomenon of Christian Missions.

Look first, then, at the fact of this primeval hope linked with Abraham's name: "The Scripture... preached before the Gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed." Here, again, I do not linger over minor points; not discussing the rendering "preached the Gospel," nor even staying to examine the precise import of the word in Genesis rendered "shall be blessed." It is quite enough for me to know that, on any view, *this* is intended here, that Abraham had—that Abraham believed he had—an assurance, a reason for the hope, that all nations should somehow or other know about him, and should somehow or other connect blessing with his name.

For the purpose of this argument we must, of course, put aside Scriptural *authority* as such. That authority granted, *cadit quæstio*; for, beyond all doubt, Missions have the warrant of the Scriptures. Looking, as I do, for a piece of evidence, I must, of course, for the time, ignore authority. May I, then, be sure, as a matter of fact verified by independent history, of this hope bound up from of old with Abraham's name? I may. Even if I should surrender, for the argument, what may seem vital to it, the perfect authenticity of Abraham's personal story, yet I have, in the matter of this hope, enough abundantly of provable fact to constitute an historic case of prediction, and of prediction against all human likelihood. For of this I am absolutely sure, as far as historic proof can make me sure of anything—as sure as I am, for instance, of the fact of the Reformation, or of the Renaissance—that this hope of a world-wide connection of blessing with Abraham's name was a prevalent thing among the heirs of Abraham half a millennium, at least, before there was any look of a fulfilment, or of tendencies to a fulfilment, on the face of history.

Not, indeed, that we need hastily surrender, even for our argument, the authenticity of Abraham's recorded life and acts. From the point of view of independent history, Abraham, at the distance of four thousand years, is a practically provable fact; a figure solidly embedded in the events of the

primeval East—that long-forgotten world of Mesopotamia, and early Canaan, and the mysterious Hittite Empire just now contributing its buried treasures to Biblical verification. From these quarters, in our “last times,” new lights are breaking in every year—fragmentary lights, but perfectly definite—upon things hidden till recently in the most complete oblivion ; and these things are found to group around, and fit into, the Biblical history of Abraham. Take one conspicuous instance—the events of Genesis xiv. We know things now, from Chaldean records, about the kings who came into collision there with Abraham, which stamp upon that whole narrative the deep and complicated seal of independent verification. From a host of identifications (once impossible, for total lack of materials) we now recognise the perfect truth-likeness of that brief episode of the invasion and defeat of Chedorlaomer and his allies ; and in this one fact a reader of Genesis who can bring a really open mind to his study, leaving really behind him a perfectly artificial and elaborate scepticism, may lawfully see the stamp of historical proof extended far and wide over the closely compacted narrative of the migrations and the hope of the Patriarch. He may be sure, with all the practical certainty of provable history, that Abraham travelled in the regions and at the time indicated ; and that he so travelled because, for some reason or another—the reason is not in question now—he carried about with him a hope that the world would hear of him, and would link blessing with his name. The same use may be made—to take another example almost at hazard—of the narrative of Genesis xxii. Why the *Hittite* at *Hebron*? How completely is that question answered now, with a hundred others raised by the fragmentary mentions of the Hittite power in Scripture, by the most recent of Asiatic explorations! The reader of *THE CHURCHMAN* will recall the summary of this class of evidence furnished in Canon Tristram’s recent paper.¹

I do not rest the weight of the argument here. It really rests on the fact which was recalled just now, that the heirs of Abraham, at least four centuries before the birth of the Lord Jesus, and therefore quite 2,500 years before the era of modern Missions, were sure that such a promise was in the heart of their ancestor. Nevertheless, the ground of the authentic truth of Abraham’s life and story is at least solid enough to invite us to pause upon it a little, and review this phenomenon as a part of perfectly credible records of the past, that such a man there was as the Abraham of Genesis, and that he did feel certain of this world-wide future for his name.

¹ See *THE CHURCHMAN* for February, 1885.

Do we adequately realize what this phenomenon actually was, so viewed? In those remote days, indescribably remote from the conditions of modern life, there lived and moved, so we may reasonably hold, this man; not an "Arab sheikh," as it was once the fashion to describe him, but a citizen of no mean city, a dweller in a port-town, possibly, on what was then the shore of the Persian Gulf. This man grew up amidst a civilization already old, Semitic, built upon Turanian ruins. From childhood, in all historic likelihood, he had been used to a solemn ritual, dedicated to the planet-gods of the eastern skies. And this man did, somehow, leave his settled home, and become for life a nomad in the earth, the already populous earth; bearing about with him, in that region and at that time, the belief that all nations should link blessing with his name. And we may further be reasonably sure as students of a past quite as ascertainable as that, for instance, of the Peloponnesian War—that this man spent his life in no vigorous efforts to secure the fulfilment of his idea, but in a course of wanderings that ended in the purchase of a field and a grave. And that then, further down the story, it matters not now how far down, his posterity, grown into a little nation, so far from being masters of the East, appear as the slaves of an Egyptian king. And that when they left that vassalage (it does not matter now how they left it), they went out, as to all surface appearances, not to affect the destinies of many nations, but merely to secure a difficult lodgment in a narrow section of Western Asia, a land without one great seaport, and altogether designed rather to be the retreat of an anchorite nation than the centre of victory and empire. And that, in point of ultimate fact, they never became, on the scale of Babylon, or Egypt, or the Hittites, a victorious power at all.

But further, we may be historically sure of yet other paradoxes in connection with this same traditional promise of world-wide Abrahamic blessing. These heirs of Abraham and his promise (we may call it, if we please, his enthusiasm, his aspiration, his idea, it matters not for this inquiry), all through a long course of ages, indeed throughout the length of their ancient national existence till it was crushed by the Roman, seemed to be destined, actually destined, entirely to belie it. Their institutions, civil and religious, however derived, seemed intended to act, and in practice usually did act, far more on the side of isolation than on that of intercourse. So powerful was this tendency that their Sacred Books, at all periods, more or less distinctly and loudly, claim that Israel alone possesses the light of supernatural truth and of eternal hope. "He hath not dealt so with any nation, and as for His judgments they have not known them." "All people will walk everyone

in the name of his God, and we will walk in the name of the Lord our God for ever and ever."

True, there were periods, long periods, in the history of Abraham's seed, marked by large intercourse with some neighbouring nations. But what was its character? Was it of a kind likely to fulfil the great hope? No, it was illicit intercourse. It was the idolatrous instincts of the people, not any sense of a mission to the outlying nations, that carried them over their borders. Their Sacred Books are loaded with the very sternest denunciations of these goings forth, and with records of extreme forms of national abasement inflicted on the too communicative people, as the alleged (and believed) consequence of neglect of their law of isolation. According to their own Records, cherished with unparalleled reverence and conviction, they were, so to speak, scourged back again and again, from an international tendency which did indeed bring about demoralizing influences of the heathen upon Israel, rather than the opposite action and results.

In brief, it is a matter capable of independent historic proof that the apparent main drift of the history of Abraham's heirs was wholly against the likelihood of the fulfilment of Abraham's traditional and astonishing idea. So far as they craved for intercourse with the nations, the craving was perpetually checked by forces which were owned to be authoritative; and it was at last so sternly checked by events that the national character settled into an intense and positive exclusivism. There was shown, indeed, a certain proselytizing energy in very late stages of the history; but it was, on the whole, both partial in its scope and grudging in its principles, and certainly not such as to give the "Gentiles" any unmistakable experience of "blessing." Just before the nation closed its ancient history, its popular aspect to the heathen world was that of hostility to mankind (*odium generis humani*). The exclusive spirit was so strong, that after two thousand years, and in the midst of powerful influences to the contrary, a descendant and heir of Abraham, the Apostle Peter, was able still to say, as stating a notorious fact, "Ye know that it is unlawful for a Jew to keep company or come unto one of another nation." This was a strange path to the fulfilment of a promise that with the name of Abraham all nations should one day associate blessing.

Yet the then persuasion that that promise was a fact, remains, let me again and again repeat it, a provable fact itself. In St. Peter's day, and ages before it, it was held, somehow or other, that all nations should so think of Abraham. This, if anything in the past, is historically certain. We know with complete certainty that three centuries at least before the birth of Jesus

of Nazareth there existed a literature, already ancient, guarded and venerated by the race that called Abraham father, and that this literature contained then, as it does now, both the text of the promise and the comment upon it of histories, and prayers, and prophetic rhapsodies, and triumphant or repentant psalms.

Side by side in the rock of history lie those two facts, the one seeming to belie the other; on this side an expectation, ages old at the date of the birth of Jesus, that Abraham was to be a name of universal benediction; and on that side a course of events, in connection with Abraham's heirs, which ran powerfully in what seemed an adverse line. On this side was an assurance, recorded in profoundly venerated records, that Abraham's "seed" should exert a world-wide influence in the sphere of good; on that side was a development of convictions and of actions which seemed in fact to result in the Rabbinic dictum that not the Gentiles, but only Israel, had part in the world to come.

What has become, then, of that old expectation? Has it fallen away among the obsolete lumber of an irrevocable past? Has it been so negatived by results, buried under such merciless glaciers of historical development, that it is a waste of precious time to spend a thought upon it amidst the realities of to-day?

On the contrary, the direct results of that expectation are a power at this moment in the world. They are the *raison d'être* of the recently developed and far-reaching energy of modern Missions. Out of the immense secular engrossments of London work and life they call men together every week, men of a sort not accustomed to spend time on antiquarian trifles, and set them to work, in eager and anxious council, planning and carrying out plans, for the world and for its blessing. This power so animates them that they feel in the matter no misgivings of unreality, nor the slightest sense of forced or artificial motives; but, on the contrary, a consciousness of a force working in their wills and a reason developing before them as they act and advance which makes them soberly judge that no business is so pressing, no enterprise so animating, no interest so vivid and so full of the life-blood of work and hope, as that which hangs (for so their enterprise does) upon this expectation borne about in the breast of an exile-citizen of Chaldean Ur, four thousand years ago, in the pastures of southern Syria.

I shall not dwell on the process which has issued in this most astonishing phenomenon; on the appearance of Jesus of Nazareth, and on the strange fact that one immediate sequel of His appearance was the seeming final demolition of all that was strongest in the Abrahamic hope, by the complete ruin of

the nation as an organic and localized community. I do not attempt elaborately to point out that that apparent demolition was *only* apparent; that Christianity was, in fact as in name, only Messianism, and that in it the Abrahamic Hope was to prove immortal. I point only to the present and energetic *fact* of its mighty vitality. Here after four millenniums this great paradox proves to be a marked phenomenon of the modern world; the name of the citizen of Chaldean Ur is, as a fact, being carried on the wings of every modern means of intercourse, and as a message charged with the supremest blessings, to every nation under heaven. An incalculable antecedent unlikeness has given way to some mysterious power. The apparent steady march of events against it, up to the Christian era, has wheeled round in the long evolutions of after-history till it is found rolling along in the very line of that once-inexplicable promise, that all nations should link blessing with the name of the Chaldean exile.

Wonderful is the aspect of Missions thus regarded. Here, from this England of our own, from this *ultima Thule* of the ancient world, this unknown land buried so deep in the northern sunsets from the very thought of a Moses and an Abraham, now, while Ur and Mamre have indeed sunk into the past, there is going forth with an ever-deepening fulness and accelerated energy, quite to the ends and corners of the region of man's habitation, the message of the Hope of Abraham. The Christian missionary goes to tell of this. The Bible-agent goes for the solitary purpose of dispersing in every language of the modern earth the primeval Book that is full of this.

There is a mysterious greatness and entire peculiarity in this phenomenon. Coincidences on a majestic scale have converged to effect it; things infinitely out of the range of the contrivance of interested or enthusiastic schemers; concurrences of profound spiritual movements in the Church with unprecedented external openings in the sphere of material, social, political, and intellectual opportunity. We all know something of the religious and secular history of this past hundred years: what the Church was, and what the world was, at its beginning, as regards the missionary spirit, and the opportunity for Missions; and what in both these respects the Church and the world are now. Great is the significance, after such a retrospect, of a Sierra Leone, a Tinnevelly, a Madagascar; of Savage Island and Rarotonga; of Greenland and Tierra del Fuego; of Chehkeang and Fuhkien; of New Zealand, and the Nyanza, and Japan. Those who know anything of modern Church history know what is meant by two hundred native clergymen working in connection with one society. They

know what is meant by the individual devotion of every white missionary—yes, and what is meant by the spirit of those numberless lovers of Missions in Great Britain, Germany, Scandinavia, and America (and now even in Africa, India, and the Southern Islands); the workers, young and old, who plan, and pray, and spare, and collect, and give, plying every artifice of the ingenuity of intense love and interest, with the one aim to raise the means, with which to spread and hasten over the earth this message, that “they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.”

For this is the message, wonderful to say. It is blessing linked with the name of Abraham. It is not the elevation of the race, nor the glories of modern civilization, nor art and culture, nor electricity and the press; it is Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham. For what is the fact, after the long millenniums and their conflicting processes? It is that the hope of the soul and of the race is One Who, “according to the flesh,” was Abraham’s descendant. Negativing, entirely and for ever, all that was carnal in the hope of the heirs of Abraham, He yet mysteriously gathered round His Person, fulfilled in detail and in the wonderful total, the great patriarchal expectation.

It is for that Name’s sake, for it alone, that the missionary goes to the heathen world; not with the set purpose to fulfil prophecy—far from it. No one who considers facts would for a moment put it so. The desire to bring about the slow realization of an old prediction would be far too circuitous a motive, taken by itself, to account for what the missionary does when he overcomes the appeals of his own heart, and of hearts dearer to him than his own, and “counts it all joy” to suffer a pain fully known only to his heavenly Master. Not the elaborate intention to justify an ancient expectation, the complex design to construct an evidence of Christianity, sways the will of the son who leaves the beloved home of all his life, and the wills of the saintly parents who give him up, as he goes away, treading upon the ruins of tenderest memories and hopes because the path of the message of Christ happens, for him, to lie in that direction. No; something more direct than the completion of Christian evidence is the object that animates purposes like these. It is the glory of the Son of God, the love of Christ passing knowledge, the new birth of the messenger’s soul to a living hope, the definite command of a personal Master, unspeakably dear and authoritative, “Go ye into all the world.” Not the prophecy but the precept sends out the missionary. But precisely here is the wonder, the significance of the matter; for here is the convergence of the lines of a plan which man could not lay. Ages

old stands out the Abrahamic promise. The fulfilment is working out to-day through the multifold channels of modern opportunity, and under the force of the regenerate affections of living souls directed at this moment upon a living, personal Object, dearer to them than life.

This is the finger of God. Is it fanaticism or enthusiasm to say so? Is it not the verdict of historic reason? Have we not here provably the supernatural? This solid fact of actual missionary enterprise, placed beside the equally solid fact of an anticipation embedded in the oldest literature in the world, is it not as direct a moral evidence of a totally superhuman purpose and energy as our minds are capable of receiving? Let us take once more our Bibles, and turn once more from them to the Missionary Report and the Missionary Atlas, and it will be a means to lift us many degrees above doubt and discouragement into a purer air than the stifling mists of "modern thought;" for in these facts, which lie close beside us, are to be seen the immediate traces of the finger of God.

Facts take precedence of theories; and the great ruling facts of history, of which we have been reviewing one, are on the side of the hope of the soul. Who will may speculate; God works. Deep across a hundred systems of criticism and culture lie traced, if we will only look, the visible footprints of His purposes.

May thoughts in this direction sometimes reanimate, from the mental side, the aims and efforts of friends of Missions at home, and of the honoured messengers among the heathen of the Lord's Name and truth. They are moving along the high road of the main purposes of the plan of God, while they walk and work by the side, and in the strength and life, of Him Who is the world's one hope, and Who is for ever the Son of David, the Son of Abraham.

H. C. G. MOULE.



ART. II.—MAN'S DOMINION OVER THE LOWER ANIMALS NOT UNLIMITED.

IN years now happily long past, a terrible spectacle was sometimes witnessed in England. Bound with cords to a frame of wood, the figure of a living man might be seen extended on his back. Presently the cords were tightened and the limbs of the wretched sufferer were nearly torn asunder. This was