

The Star in the East.

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2018 with funding from

This project is made possible by a grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services as administered by the Pennsylvania Department of Education through the Office of Commonwealth Libraries

D. D. Stuart

24

The Star in the East;

A SERMON,

PREACHED IN THE PARISH-CHURCH OF ST. JAMES,
BRISTOL, ON SUNDAY, FEB. 26, 1809,

FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE

“Society for Missions to Africa and the East.”

BY

THE REV. CLAUDIUS BUCHANAN, LL. D.

From India.

“For we have seen His Star in the East, and are come to worship Him.”—Matt. ii. 2.

PUBLISHED BY BRADFORD AND INSKEEP, PHILADELPHIA;
AND INSKEEP AND BRADFORD NEW-YORK.

ALSO BY

COALE & THOMAS, BALTIMORE; OLIVER C. GREENLEAF, BOSTON; THOMAS
& WHIPPLE, NEWBURYPORT; J. DABENEY, AND CUSHING & APPLETON,
SALEM; EDMUND MORFORD, CHARLESTON; DANIEL RAPINE, WASHING-
TON; JOSEPH MILLIGAN, GEORGETOWN; AND JAMES KENNEDY, SENIOR,
ALEXANDRIA.

PRINTED BY SMITH AND MAXWELL.

1809.

The War in the East

A FEBRUARY

AND THE
THE
THE

THE

THE

THE

THE

THE

THE

THE

A SERMON.

MATTHEW II. 2.

“ For we have seen his Star in the East, and are come to worship him.”

WHEN, in the fulness of time, the Son of God came down from heaven to take our nature upon him, many circumstances concurred to celebrate the event, and to render it an illustrious epoch in the history of the world. It pleased the Divine Wisdom, that the manifestation of the Deity should be distinguished by a suitable glory: and this was done, by the ministry of Angels, by the ministry of Men, and by the ministry of Nature herself.

First, This was done by the ministry of *Angels*; for an Angel announced to the shepherds “ the glad tidings of great joy which should be to all people;” and a “ multitude of the heavenly host sang Glory to God in the Highest, on earth peace, good-will toward men.”

Secondly, It was done by the ministry of *Men*; for illustrious persons, divinely directed, came from

a far country, to offer gifts, and to do honour to the new-born King.

Thirdly, It was done by the ministry of *Nature*. Nature herself was commanded to bear witness to the presence of the God of Nature. A Star or Divine Light, pointed out significantly from heaven the spot upon earth where the Saviour was born.

Thus, I say, it pleased the Divine Wisdom, by an assemblage of heavenly testimonies, to glorify the incarnation of the Son of God.

All these testimonies were appropriate; but the *Journey of the Eastern Sages* had in it a peculiar fitness. We can hardly imagine a more natural mode of honouring the event than this, that illustrious persons should proceed from a far country to visit the child which was born Saviour of the world. They came, as it were, in the name of the Gentiles, to acknowledge the heavenly gift, and to bear their testimony against that nation which rejected it. They came as the *representatives* of the whole heathen world; not only of the heathens in the East, but also of the heathens in the West, from whom *we* are descended. In the name of the whole world, lying “in darkness, and in the shadow of death,” they came inquiring for that Light which, they had heard, was to visit them in the fulness of time. “And the Star which they saw in the East went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was. And when they were come into the house, they

“fell down and worshipped him; and when they had
 “opened their treasures, they presented unto him
 “gifts, gold, and frankincense, and myrrh;” and
 they departed into their own country.

Do you ask how the Star of Christ was understood
 in the East? or why Providence ordained that pe-
 culiar mode of intimation?

Christ was foretold in old prophecy, under the
 name of the “*Star* that should arise out of Jacob;”
 and the rise of the Star in Jacob was notified to the
 world, by the appearance of an actual Star.

We learn from authentic Roman history, that
 there prevailed “in the East” a constant expectation
 of a Prince, who should arise out of Judea, and rule
 the world. That such an expectation did exist, has
 been confirmed by the ancient writings of India.
 Whence, then, arose this extraordinary expectation,
 for it was found also in the Sybilline books of Rome?

The Jewish expectation of the Messiah had per-
 vaded the East long before the period of his appear-
 ance. The Jews are called by their own prophet
 the “Expecting people,”* (as it may be translated,
 and as some of the Jews of the East translate it,)
 the “people looking for and expecting One to
 come.” Wherever, then, the ten tribes were car-
 ried throughout the East, they carried with them
 their *expectation*. And they carried also the pro-
 phecies on which their expectation was founded.

* Is. xviii. 2. “The people meted out,” in our translation.

Now one of the clearest of these prophecies runs in these words: "There shall come a *Star* out of Jacob." And as in the whole dispensation concerning the Messiah, there is a wonderful fitness between the words of prophecy and the person spoken of, so it pleased the Divine Wisdom that the rise of the Star in Jacob should be announced to the world by the appearance of an actual Star, (for by what other means could the great event be more significantly communicated to the remote parts of the earth?) and this actual Star, in itself a proper emblem of that "Light which was to lighten the Gentiles," conducted them to Him who was called in a figure the Star of Jacob, and the "glory of his people Israel;" and who hath said of himself (Rev. xxii. 16,) "I am the bright and morning Star."*

But again, why was the East thus honoured? Why was the East, and not the West, the scene of these transactions? The East was the scene of the first revelation of God. The fountains of inspiration were first opened in the East. And, after the flood, the first family of the new world was planted in the East; I mean the East, in relation to Judea. Besides, millions of the human race inhabit that portion of the globe. The chief population of the world is in these regions. And in the middle of *them* the Star of Christ first appeared. And, led by it,

* The Jews used to speak of their Messiah under the appellation of *Bar Cocab*, or, "the Son of the Star;" and false Christs actually assumed that name.

the wise men passed through many nations, tongues, and kindreds, before they arrived at Judea in the West; bearing tidings to the world that the Light was come, that the "Desire of all Nations" was come. Even to Jerusalem herself they brought the first intimation that her long-expected Messiah was come.

Now, my brethren, as the East was honoured in the first age, in thus pointing out the Messiah to the world; so now again, after a long interval of darkness, it is bearing witness to the truth of His religion; not indeed by the shining of a Star, but by affording luminous evidence of the divine origin of the Christian Faith. It affords evidence, not only of the general truth of its *history*, but of its peculiar *doctrines*; and not of its doctrines merely, but of the *divine power* of these doctrines in convincing the understandings and converting the hearts of men. And in this sense it is, that "we have seen his Star in "the East, and are come to worship him."

And when these evidences shall have been laid before you, you will see that the Time is come for diffusing His religion throughout the world; you will "offer gifts" in His name for the promotion of the work; and you will offer up prayers in its behalf, "that God would be pleased to make his ways "known, his saving health unto all nations."

In this discourse, we propose to lay before you,

1st. EVIDENCES of the *general truth* of the Christian Religion, existing in the East.

2dly. EVIDENCES of the *divine power* of that religion, exemplified in the East.

I. The *general truth* of the Christian Religion is illustrated by certain evidences in the East. Of these we shall mention the following.

1. Ancient writings of India, containing particulars of the *history* of Christ.

2. Certain doctrines of the East, shadowing forth the peculiar doctrines of Christianity, and manifestly derived from a common origin.

3. The state of the *Jews* in the East, confirming the truth of ancient prophecy.

4. The state of the *Syrian Christians* in the East, subsisting for many ages, a separate and distinct people in the midst of the heathen world.

These subjects, however, we must notice very briefly.

1. Hindoo history illustrates the *history* of the Gospel. There have lately been discovered in India, certain Shanscrit writings containing Testimonies of Christ. They relate to a Prince who reigned

about the period of the Christian æra; and whose history, though mixed with fable, contains particulars which correspond, in a surprising manner, with the advent, birth, miracles, death, and resurrection of our Saviour. The event mentioned in the words of the Text is exactly recorded, namely, That certain holy men, directed by a Star, journeyed toward the West, where they beheld the incarnation of the Deity.*

These important records have been translated by a learned Orientalist,† and he has deposited the originals among the archives of the Asiatic Society. From these, and from other documents, he has compiled a work, entitled “The History of the introduction of the Christian Religion into India; its progress and decline;” and at the conclusion of the work he thus expresses himself: “I have written
 “ this account of Christianity in India with the im-
 “ partiality of an Historian; fully persuaded that our
 “ holy religion cannot receive any additional lustre
 “ from it.”

Thus far of the *history* of the Gospel.

2. We are now to notice certain *doctrines* of the East, shadowing forth the doctrines of Christianity.

* This testimony of the Hindoo writer accords with that of *Chalcedius*, the ancient commentator on Plato, who adds, “that the infant
 “ Majesty being found, the wise men worshipped, and gave gifts suitable to so great a God.”

† Mr. Wilford.

The peculiar doctrines of the Christian Religion are so strongly represented in certain systems of the East, that we cannot doubt the source whence they have been derived. We find in them the doctrines of the Trinity, of the Incarnation of the Deity, of the Atonement for Sin, and of the influence of the Divine Spirit.

First, The doctrine of the *Trinity*. The Hindoos believe in *one* God Brahma, the creator of all things; and yet they represent him as subsisting in *three* persons; and they worship one or other of these persons throughout every part of India. And what proves that they hold this doctrine distinctly is, that their most ancient representation of the Deity is formed of one body and three faces. Nor are these representations confined to India alone; but they are to be found in other parts of the East.

Whence, then, my brethren, has been derived this idea of a TRIUNE God? If, as some allege, the doctrine of the Trinity among Christians be of recent origin, whence have the Hindoos derived it? When you shall have read all the volumes of Philosophy on the subject, you will not have obtained a satisfactory answer to this question.

Secondly, The doctrine of the *Incarnation* of the Deity. The Hindoos believe that one of the persons in their Trinity (and that, too, the second per-

son) was “manifested in the flesh.” Hence their fables of the incarnations of Vishnoo, of which you may have heard. And this doctrine of the incarnation of the Deity is found over almost the whole of Asia.

Whence, then, originated this idea, that “God should become man, and take our nature upon him?” The Hindoos do not consider that it was an Angel merely that became man, but God himself. The incarnation of God is a frequent theme of their discourse. We cannot doubt whence this peculiar tenet of religion has been derived. We must believe that all the fabulous incarnations of the Eastern Mythology are derived from the real incarnation of the Son of God, or from the prophecies which went before it.

Thirdly, The doctrine of *Atonement* for Sin, by the shedding of blood. To this day in Hindostan, the people bring the Goat or Kid to the Temple; and the Priest sheds the blood of the innocent victim. Nor is this peculiar to Hindostan. Throughout the whole East, the doctrine of a sacrifice for sin seems to exist in one form or other.

How is it then, that some of you in this country say that there is no Atonement! For, ever since “Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain;” ever since Noah, the father of the new world, “offered burnt-offerings on the Altar,” sacrifices have been offered up in almost every na-

tion; as if for a constant memorial before the world, that, "without shedding of blood, there is no remission of sin."

Fourthly, The doctrine of the influence of the *Spirit* of God. In the most ancient writings of the Hindoos, some of which have been lately published, it is asserted that the "divine spirit, or light of holy knowledge," influences the minds of men. And the man who is the subject of such influence is called "the man twice-born." Many chapters are devoted to the duties, character, and virtues of "the man twice-born."

If, then, in the very systems of the heathen world, this exalted idea should have a place, how much more might we expect to find it in the revelation of the true God!

We could illustrate other doctrines by similar analogies, did time permit. If these analogies were merely partial or accidental, they would be less important. But they are not casual; as every man who is versed in the Holy Scriptures and in Oriental Mythology well knows. They are general and systematic. Was it ever alleged that the Light of Nature could teach such doctrines as these? They are all *contrary* to the Light of Nature.

These, my brethren, are doctrines which exist at this day, in the midst of the idolatry and moral corruption of the heathen world. Every where there

appears to be a *counterfeit* of the *true* doctrine. The inhabitants have lost sight of the only true God, and they apply these doctrines to their false gods. For these doctrines are relics of the first Faith of the earth. They are, as you see, the strong characters of God's primary revelation to man, which neither the power of man, nor time itself, hath been able to destroy; but which have endured from age to age, like the works of nature, the moon and stars, which God hath created incorruptible.

3. Another circumstance illustrating the truth of the Christian religion in the East, is the state of the *Jews*. The Jews are scattered over the whole face of the East, and the fulfilment of the *prophecies* concerning them is far more evident in these regions, than it is here among Christian nations.

The last great punishment of the Jewish people was inflicted for their last great crime—their shedding the blood of the Son of God! And this instance of divine indignation has been exhibited to all nations, and all nations seem to have been employed by the ordinance of God in inflicting the punishment.

By express prophecy, the Jews were sentenced to become “the scorn and reproach of all people;” and “a proverb and by-word among all nations.” Now, that their stubborn unbelief should be a re-

proach to them among Christian nations here in the West, is not so strange; that they should be a proverb and by-word among those who had heard the prophecy concerning them, is not so remarkable. But to have seen them (as I have seen them) insulted and persecuted by the ignorant nations in the East; in the very words of prophecy, “trodden down of the heathen;” trodden down by a people who never heard the name of Christ; who never heard that the Jews had rejected Christ; and who, in fact, *punished the Jews, without knowing their crime*; this, I say, hath appeared to me an awful completion of the divine sentence.

4. Another monument of the Christian religion in the East, is the state of the *Syrian Christians*, subsisting for many ages a separate and distinct people, in the midst of the corruption and idolatry of the heathen world. They exist in the very midst of India, like the bush of Moses, burning and not consumed; surrounded by the enemies of their faith, and subject to their power, and yet not destroyed. There they exist, having the pure word of God in their hands, and speaking in their churches that same language which our Saviour himself spake in the streets of Jerusalem.

We may contemplate the history of this people, existing so long in that dark region, as a type of the *inextinguishable Light* of Christ's religion; and in

this sense it may be truly said, “ We have seen his
“ Star in the East.”

The probable design of the Divine Providence, in preserving this people, appears to be this: That they should be a *seed* of the Church in Asia: that they should be a special instrument for the conversion of the surrounding heathen, when God’s appointed time is come; a people prepared for his service, as fellow-labourers with us; a people, in short, in the midst of Asia, to whom we can point as an evidence to the rest, of the truth and antiquity of the Christian Faith.

And this shall suffice as to the testimonies of the general truth of Christianity existing in the East.

II. We proposed, in the second branch of the discourse, to lay before you some evidences of the *divine power* of the Christian Religion exemplified in the East.

To say that Christianity has been propagated in the East, *as* other religions have been propagated, is to say nothing. It is little to say that thousands have adopted the *name*, and that it pervades populous provinces. For three centuries past, the Romish Church has diffused the *name* of Christianity throughout the East; and this success demonstrates how practicable it is to “ propagate our religion,” (in

the common sense of that expression) throughout all nations of the world. Providence seems to have ordained this previous labour of the Romish Church, to facilitate the preaching of the true Gospel at the appointed time; for Christianity is found, even in its worst form, to possess a moral and civilizing efficiency.

But it is in the East, as it is in the West—all are not Christians who are called Christians. “He is not a Christian, who is one outwardly; neither is that baptism which is outward in the flesh.” The fact was, the Romish Church preached Christianity in the East, *without the Bible*.

Let us now inquire, what has been the consequence of sending the Bible to the East. It is nearly one hundred years since the Bible was sent to the Hindoos; but not by our country. This honour was given to the Protestant churches of Denmark and Germany. It was sent to a certain nation in the South of India; for there are many nations in Hindostan. What then was the effect of giving them the Bible? It was the same as that which followed the giving the Bible to us, while we lay in almost Hindoo darkness, buried in the ignorance and superstition of the church of Rome. It gave light and knowledge; God blessed his own word to the conversion of the heart, and men began to worship him in sincerity and truth.

That province in India, which was blessed with the Bible, hath since “seen a great Light.” During nearly the whole of the last century, multitudes of Hindoos (both heathens and Roman Catholics) became members of the Protestant Church, one generation after another; and amongst them there has ever been found, according to the records of the Mission,* such a proportion of serious piety, as you might expect to find, when the Gospel is preached with faithfulness and zeal.

During the whole of the last century, Providence favoured them with a succession of holy and learned men, educated at the Universities of Germany: among whom was the venerable SWARTZ, called the Apostle of the East; and others not much inferior to him, men whose names are scarcely known in this country, but who are as famous among the Hindoos, as Wickliffe and Luther are amongst us. The ministry of these good men was blessed in many provinces in the South of India, and the bounds of their churches are extending unto this day. The language of the country is called the *Tamul*; and the first translation of the Bible, in that language, was made, as we said, about a hundred years ago. Like Wickliffe’s Bible with us, it became the father of many versions, and, after a succession of improved editions, it is now considered by the Brahmins them-

* These Records are published in upwards of 30 volumes, thick 4to.

selves (like Luther's Bible in German) as the classical standard of the Tamul tongue.

A Jubilee has lately been celebrated in India, in honour of the Gospel. In the month of July, 1806, a Jubilee was observed by these Hindoo churches, in commemoration of the arrival of the two first Protestant Missionaries on the 9th of July, 1706. The year 1806, being the *hundredth* year (or the second fiftieth) since the Gospel first visited their land, was to them "the year of Jubilee." The happy occasion had been long anticipated, and was marked with demonstrations of joy and gladness. The people, as we were informed, walked in procession to their churches, carrying palms in their hands, and singing the 98th Psalm; and, after offering up praises and thanksgivings to the Most High, they heard a sermon suitable to the day. The sermon at the jubilee of Trichinopoly was preached by their aged Minister, the Rev. Mr. Pohle, from these words: "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations; baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."*

These were the effects of sending the Bible to the East. Men were "brought to a knowledge of the truth;" and at the end of a hundred years, the natives kept the jubilee of the *Bible*.

* See Accounts of the "Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge," just published.

Such, my brethren, was the Light in the South of India. And now a Light hath sprung up in the North, of which you have heard. Our own country hath begun, though late, to dispense “the word of Life.” And although the time has been short, the success has been great. In the North, in the West; and in Ceylon, translations of the Scriptures are going on in almost all the languages of Oriental India.

Our own country hath at length assumed an interest in diffusing the Gospel. “In the fulness of time,” we trust, her different societies have come forth, as with one consent, to begin the work of evangelizing the East. “In the fulness of time,” we trust, hath this country begun, by these instruments, to employ her great power, and her enlightened zeal, in extending the knowledge of the true God throughout the world.

We ought not to regret that the work is carried on by Christians of different denominations; for if they teach the religion of the Bible, their labour will be blessed. We have no contentions in India, like those in Britain, between Protestants of different names. There they are all friends. The strife there is between light and darkness; between the true God and an idol. So liberal and catholic is the Christian in Asia (while he looks over the map of the World, and can scarcely find where the isle of Britain lies) that he considers even the term “Protestant” as being in a certain degree exclusive or sectarian. “The religion of the Bible,” or,

“the religion of Christ,” is the name by which he would describe his creed. For when the idolater once abjures his own cast for the Gospel, he considers the differences of Protestants (if he ever hear of them) as being very insignificant. Indeed he cannot well understand them. In the great revolution that takes place in his mind (if his conversion be real) he cannot contemplate these minute objects. We ought not then, I say, to regret that different classes of Christians are employed in the work. For the case is an exact parallel of that recorded in the Gospel (Mark ix. 38): “And John answering said, Master, “we saw one casting out Devils in thy name, and he “followeth not *us*; and we forbad him, because he “followeth not *us*. But Jesus said, FORBID HIM “NOT.”

On my arrival from India, a few months ago, I learned that a controversy had engaged the attention of the public, for some time, on the question of sending Missions to the East. In the future history of our country it will scarcely be believed, that in the present age an attempt should have been made to prevent the diffusion of the blessed principles of the Christian religion. It will not be believed that an attempt should have been made to prove by argument, that it was wrong to make known the Revelation of the true God to our fellow-men; or if, in some instances, it might be permitted (as in the case of *remote* nations) that we ought not to instruct *that*

people who were affirmed to be the *most* superstitious, and *most* prejudiced; and who were *our own* subjects. We scarcely believe ourselves that, twenty years ago, an attempt was made to defend the traffic in *slaves*, and that books were written to show that it was humane in its character, just in its principle, and honourable to our nation. The discussion, therefore, that has taken place on the civilization of the East, has been of important use. Men in general were not informed. The scene of action was remote, and the subject was new in almost all its relations. Even to some of those persons, who had been in India, the subject was new. Just as in this country, if you were to ask certain persons whether they had any acquaintance with the *religious* world, they would say they had never heard there *was* such a world; so some from India hazarded an opinion concerning the “inveterate prejudices” of certain tribes in the East, who scarcely knew the geography of the country where they lived; what their religion was, or whether they had any religion at all. They had seen no Star in the East; they had heard of no jubilee for the Bible. Like the spies of Israel, who brought back “an evil report” from Canaan, they reported that India was no “land of promise” for the Gospel; that the land was *barren*, and that the men were *Anakims*. But the faithful Swartz gave another testimony. He affirmed that it is “exceeding good land;” and “his record “is true.” He who was best qualified to give an

opinion on the subject, who preached among the Hindoos for nearly fifty years, founded churches among them in different provinces, established schools for their children, disseminated religious tracts in their own tongue, and intimately knew their language, manners, prejudices, and superstitions; he who restored the Christian character to respect, after it had fallen into contempt; who was selected by the natives as an arbiter of their differences with the English, and whom both Hindoos and English loved and feared in his life and honoured in his death;* this good man, I say, differed in opinion

* At the funeral of Mr. Swartz, the Hindoo Rajah of Tanjore came to do honour to his memory in the presence of his Braminical court. *He covered the body with a gold cloth, and shed a flood of tears.* He afterwards composed an epitaph for him whom he called "his father and his friend," and caused it to be inscribed on the stone which covers Swartz's grave, in one of the Christian churches of Tanjore.

The English also have pronounced a noble and affecting encomium on the character of this estimable Missionary.

The Honourable the East-India Company have sent out to Madras a monument of marble, to be erected in the church of St. Mary at that place, to the memory of the Rev. Mr. Swartz, inscribed with a suitable epitaph; and they announced it, in their general letter, dated the 29th of October, 1806, "as a testimony of the deep sense they entertained of his transcendent merit, of his unwearied labours in the cause of religion and piety, and of his public services at Tanjore, where the influence of his name and character was, for a long course of years, productive of important benefits to the Company." The Honourable Court further adds: "On no subject has the Court of Directors been more unanimous than in their anxious desire to perpetuate the memory of this eminent person, and to excite in others an emulation of his great example." They direct, finally, "that translations shall be made of the epitaph into the country languages, and published at Madras; and that the native inhabitants shall be encouraged to view the monument."

from some, who have lately ventured to give a judgment in this matter: he affirmed that it was England's DUTY to make known the Revelation of the true God to her Indian subjects.

In the meantime, while men hold different opinions on the subject here, the great work goes on in the East. The Christians there will probably never hear of our dissensions, nor, if they should hear of them, would they be much interested about them. And on this point I judge it right to notice a very singular mistake, which appears to have existed on both sides of the question. It seems to have been understood that we have it in our power to prevent the progress of Christianity in India, if we wish to do so; if such a measure should be recommended by what is called "a wise policy." But we have *no* power to prevent the extension of the Christian religion in India. We have it in our power, indeed, greatly to *promote* it, but we have no power to *destroy* it. It would be as easy to extinguish Christianity in Great Britain as in India. There are thousands of Christians in India—hundreds of thousands of Christians. And while we are contending here, whether it be a proper thing to convert the Hindoos, they will go on extending the bounds of their churches, keeping their jubilees, and enjoying the blessings of the Gospel, regardless of our opinions or authority.

The dispute in this country, relative to the efficiency of preaching the faith of Christ to the heathen

world, is not unlike the dispute of the Jewish doctors in the Gospel, concerning our Saviour's power "to forgive sins." We read that our Lord had healed a woman, who was a sinner. And he said unto her, "Daughter, thy sins are forgiven; thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace." Then began the Pharisees to say within themselves, "Who is this that forgiveth sins also?" But she felt in herself that she was healed, and, leaving the doctors to dispute whether "her faith could save her or not," she departed in peace and joy.

So, while we are disputing here, whether the faith of Christ can save the heathens, the Gospel hath gone forth "for the healing of the nations." A congregation of Hindoos will assemble on the morning of the Sabbath, under the shade of a Banian tree, not one of whom, perhaps, ever heard of Great Britain by name. There the Holy Bible is opened; the word of Christ is preached with eloquence and zeal; the affections are excited; the voice of prayer and praise is lifted up; and He who hath promised his presence, "when two or three are gathered together in his name, is there in the midst of them to bless them, according to his word." These scenes I myself have witnessed; and it is in this sense in particular I can say, "We have seen his Star in the East, and are come to worship him."

Thus far we have spoken of the success of the Gospel in Asia, by means of European preachers.

But we shall now exhibit to you evidence from another source, from a new and unexpected quarter. We are now to declare what has been done, independently of *our* exertions, and in regions where we have no labourers, and no access. And this I do to show you, that whether we assist in the work or not, it is God's will *that it should begin*. You have hitherto been contemplating the Light in India. We are now to announce to you, that a Light hath appeared in Arabia, and dawned, as it were, on the Temple of Mecca itself.

Two Mahometans of Arabia, persons of consideration in their own country, have been lately converted to the Christian faith. One of them has already suffered martyrdom, and the other is now engaged in translating the Scriptures, and in concerting plans for the conversion of his countrymen. The name of the martyr was Abdallah; and the name of the other, who is now translating the Scriptures, is Sabat; or, as he is called since his Christian baptism, Nathaniel Sabat. Sabat resided in my house some time before I left India, and I had from his own mouth the chief part of the account which I shall now give to you. Some particulars I had from others. His conversion took place after the martyrdom of Abdallah, "to whose death he was consenting;" and he related the circumstances to me with many tears.

Abdallah and Sabat were intimate friends, and being young men of family in Arabia, they agreed to travel together, and to visit foreign countries. They were both zealous Mahometans. Sabat is son of Ibrahim Sabat, a noble family of the line of Beni-Sabat, who trace their pedigree to Mahomet. The two friends left Arabia, after paying their adorations at the tomb of their prophet at Mecca, and travelled through Persia, and thence to Cabul. Abdallah was appointed to an office of state under Zemaun Shah, King of Cabul; and Sabat left him there, and proceeded on a tour through Tartary.

While Abdallah remained at Cabul, he was converted to the Christian faith by the perusal of a Bible (as is supposed) belonging to a Christian from Armenia, then residing at Cabul.* In the Mahometan states, it is death for a man of rank to become a Christian. Abdallah endeavoured for a time to conceal his conversion, but finding it no longer possible, he determined to flee to some of the Christian churches near the Caspian Sea. He accordingly left Cabul in disguise, and had gained the great city of Bochara, in Tartary, when he was met in the streets of that city by his friend Sabat, who immediately recognised him. Sabat had heard of his conversion and flight, and was filled with indignation at his conduct. Abdallah knew his danger, and threw himself at the feet of Sabat. He confessed that he

* The Armenian Christians in Persia have among them a few copies of the Arabic Bible.

was a Christian, and implored him, by the sacred tie of their former friendship, to let him escape with his life. “But, Sir,” said Sabat, when relating the story himself, “*I had no pity*. I caused my servants “to seize him, and I delivered him up to Morad “Shah, King of Bochara. He was sentenced to die, “and a herald went through the city of Bochara, announcing the time of his execution. An immense “multitude attended, and the chief men of the city. “I also went and stood near to Abdallah. He was “offered his life, if he would abjure Christ, the executioner standing by him with his sword in his “hand. ‘No,’ said he (as if the proposition were “impossible to be complied with) ‘I cannot abjure “Christ.’ Then one of his hands was cut off at the “wrist. He stood firm, his arm hanging by his side “with but little motion. A physician, by desire of “the king, offered to heal the wound, if he would “recant. He made no answer, but looked up steadfastly towards heaven, like Stephen the first martyr, “his eyes streaming with tears. He did not look with “anger towards *me*. He looked at me, but it was “benignly, and with the countenance of forgiveness. “His other hand was then cut off. But, Sir,” said Sabat, in his imperfect English, “he never *changed*, “he never *changed*. And when he bowed his head “to receive the blow of death, all Bochara seemed to “say, ‘What new thing is this?’”

Sabat had indulged the hope that Abdallah would have recanted when he was offered his life; but when

he saw that his friend was dead, he resigned himself to grief and remorse. He travelled from place to place, seeking rest, and finding none. At last he thought that he would visit India. He accordingly came to Madras about five years ago. Soon after his arrival, he was appointed by the English government a Mufti, or expounder of Mahometan law; his great learning, and respectable station in his own country, rendering him eminently qualified for that office. And now the period of his own conversion drew near. While he was at Visagapatam, in the Northern Circars, exercising his professional duties, Providence brought in his way a New Testament in Arabic.* He read it with deep thought, the Koran lying before him. He compared them together, and at length the truth of the word of God fell on his mind, as he expressed it, like a flood of light. Soon afterwards he proceeded to Madras, a journey of 300 miles, to seek Christian baptism; and having made a public confession of his faith, he was baptized by the Rev. Dr. Kerr, in the English Church at that place, by the name of Nathaniel, in the twenty-seventh year of his age.

Being now desirous to devote his future life to the glory of God, he resigned his secular employ, and came by invitation to Bengal, where he is now engaged in translating the Scriptures into the Persian language. This work hath not hitherto been execu-

* One of those copies sent to India by the "Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge."

ted, for want of a translator of sufficient ability. The Persian is an important language in the East, being the general language of Western Asia, particularly among the higher classes, and is understood from Calcutta to Damascus. But the great work which occupies the attention of this noble Arabian, is the promulgation of the Gospel among his own countrymen; and from the present fluctuations of religious opinion in Arabia, he is sanguine in his hopes of success. His first work is entitled, (Neama Besharatin lil Arabi) "*Happy News for Arabia;*" written in the Nabuttee, or common dialect of the country. It contains an eloquent and argumentative elucidation of the truth of the Gospel, with copious authorities admitted by the Mahometans themselves, and particularly by the Wahabians. And, prefixed to it, is an account of the conversion of the author, and an appeal to the members of his well-known family in Arabia, for the truth of the facts.*

* Sabat is now at Dinapore, in Bengal, with the Rev. Mr. Martyn, Fellow of St. John's College, Cambridge, Chaplain to the East-India Company, who is well qualified, by his knowledge of the Arabic and Persian languages, to superintend his labours. Mirza Fitrut, another celebrated Persian scholar, who visited England some years ago, is engaged as the coadjutor of Sabat in his translation. Mr. Martyn himself is translating the Scriptures into the Hindostanee language. Sabat, soon after his arrival in Bengal, visited the Baptist Missionaries at Serampore, and remained there for two months and a half, that is, from August to October, 1807. Ever since that period he has been at Dinapore. Mr. Martyn, in his latest letters, speaks of his friend Sabat in terms of affection and admiration. Sabat accounted himself, at one time, the best mathematician and logician in Arabia. Mr. Martyn was senior Wrangler in mathematics at Cambridge, in the year 1801.

The following circumstance in the history of Sabat ought not to have been omitted. When his family in Arabia had heard that he had followed the example of Abdallah, and become a Christian, they despatched his brother to India (a voyage of two months) to assassinate him. While Sabat was sitting in his house at Visagapatam, his brother presented himself in the disguise of a Faqueer, or beggar, having a dagger concealed under his mantle. He rushed on Sabat, and wounded him. But Sabat seized his arm, and his servants came to his assistance. He then recognized his brother. The assassin would have become the victim of public justice, but Sabat interceded for his brother, and sent him home in peace, with letters and presents, to his mother's house in Arabia.

And these, my brethren, are the instances I wished to lay before you, of the divine power of the Christian religion recently exemplified in the East. The conversions of Abdallah and Sabat seem to have been as evidently produced by the Spirit of God, as any conversion in the primitive church. Other instances have occurred in Arabia of a similar kind, and on the very borders of Palestine itself. These are like the solitary notices which, in other nations, have announced the approach of general illumination. John Huss, and Jerom of Prague, were not, perhaps, more talked of in Europe, than Abdallah and Sabat are, at this day, in Bucharria and Arabia.

What conclusion, then, shall we draw from these facts? It is this: that the time for diffusing our religion in the East is come. We shall notice some other particulars which encourage us to think that the time is come.

1. The minds of good men seem every where to be impressed with the duty of making the attempt. Nearly fifteen years have elapsed since it began, and their ardour is not abated. On the contrary, they gather strength as they proceed; new instruments are found, and liberal contributions are made by the people. Indeed the consciences of men seem to bear witness that the work is of God.

The rapid success of this undertaking must appear almost incredible to those who are not acquainted with the fact. Translations of the Scriptures are carried on, not only in the languages of India, Persia, and Arabia, but in those also of Burmah and China. Mount Caucasus, in the interior of Asia, is another centre of translation for the East, particularly for the numerous nations of the Tartar race. The Scriptures are preparing for the Malayan isles, and for the isles of the Pacific sea. The great continent of Africa has become the scene of different missions and translations. North and South America are sending forth the Scriptures. They are sent to the uttermost parts of the earth. They have been sent to Greenland, Labrador, and Austral Asia. We might almost say, "There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard."

And this spirit, for the diffusion of the truth, is not confined to Britain. It is found among good men of every Christian nation. Perhaps on this day prayers are offered up in behalf of the work, in Europe, Asia, Africa, and America. We are encouraged, then, to believe, that the time is come; in the first place, by the *consent* of *good men*. When I say good men, I mean religious and devout men, whose minds are not entirely occupied with the politics and affairs of this world, but who are “looking for the consolation of Israel;” as it is expressed in these words, “Thy kingdom come.”

2. Another circumstance indicating that the time is at hand, is the general contemplation of the *prophecies*. The prophecies of Scripture are at this time pondered as seriously in Asia as in Europe. Even the Jews in the East, begin to study the oracles of their prophet Isaiah. And, what is more important, the prophecies begin to be published among heathen nations; and we may expect that every nation will soon be able to read the divine decree concerning itself.

3. The Holy Scriptures are translating into various languages.

When the Gospel was first to be preached to all nations, it was necessary to give a diversity of *tongues*; a *tongue* for each *nation*; and this was done by the Divine Power. But in this second

promulgation, as it were, of the Gospel, the work will probably be carried on by a diversity of *translations*, a diversity of Scriptures; a *translation* for each *nation*. Instead of the gift of tongues, God, by his Providence, is giving to mankind a gift of Scriptures.

4. Another circumstance, which seems to testify that this work is *of God*, is the commotion in the bands of Infidelity *against it*. “Herod is troubled, “and all Jerusalem with him.” A spirit hath issued from the mouth of infidelity, which rageth against Him whose Star appeared in the East, and would destroy the work in its *infancy*. It rageth not against the Romish Church in the East, though that be Christian; nor against the Armenian Church in the East, though that be Christian; nor against the Greek Church in the East, though that be Christian; but it rageth against the religion of the New Testament, that vital religion which aims at the conversion of the hearts of men.

Our Saviour hath said, “The Gospel shall be “published among all nations.” But these resist the Divine Word, and say it cannot be published in all nations. Our Lord hath said, “Go ye into all “the world, and preach the Gospel to every crea-
“ture.” But these allege that the Gospel cannot be preached to every creature, for that “the bond
“of superstition is too strong, or that the influence
“of Christianity is too weak.”

These are unguarded words, and ought not to be heard in a Christian country. These are presumptuous words, arraigning the dispensation of the Most High. Such words as these were once spoken by the philosophers of Greece and Rome, but the Gospel prevailed, and first erected its dominion among *them*. In process of time the barbarous nations of Europe yielded to its sway, of which *we* are evidences at this day. And the nations of Asia will yield to the same power, and the truth will prevail, and the Gospel shall be preached over the whole world.

5. The last circumstance which we shall mention, as indicating that the period is come for diffusing the Light of Revelation, is the *revolution of nations*, and “the signs of the times.”

Men of serious minds, who are erudite in Holy Scripture, and in the history of the world, look forward to great events. They judge of the future from the past. They have *seen* great events; events which, twenty years ago, would have appeared as incredible as the *conversion of the whole world to Christianity*.

At no former period have the judgments of heaven been so evidently directed against the nations which are called Christian, as at this day. It is manifest that God hath a controversy with his people, whatever be the cause. The *heathen* world enjoys a comparative tranquillity. But *Christian*

nations are visited in quick succession by his awful judgments. What, then, is the cause of the judgments of God on his Christian people?

If we believe the declarations of God, in his Holy Word, we shall ascribe the judgment of Christian nations, at this day, to their rejecting, so generally, the testimony of Christ. That nation which first "denied his name before men," was first given up to suffer terrible judgments itself, and is now permitted to become the instrument of inflicting judgments on others. And this is agreeable to the ordinary course of God's just and retributive Providence. That kingdom which first seduced others by its infidelity, is now become the instrument of their punishment. The same retributive Providence is "making inquisition for the blood of the Saints." The massacres, fires, and anathemas of a former day filled the minds of men with dismay. *We* forget these scenes, but all things are present with God. And as a nation cannot be punished as a nation in the next world for its iniquity, it must be punished in this world; and its "sins will be visited "to the third and fourth generation." For a long time (as men count time) God kept silence; but the day of retribution is come at last, and the seats of the inquisition must be purged with blood.

From the fury of these desolating judgments *we* have hitherto been preserved. "Righteousness "exalteth a nation." (Prov. xvi. 24.) It would

appear as if God would thus do honour to a Church holding pure doctrine, and to a State united with that Church which hath defended the true Faith, amidst the superstitions and corruptions which have so long reigned in the Christian world. Latterly, indeed, it should seem as if God had selected this nation, as formerly his chosen people Israel, to preserve among men a knowledge of the true religion; for we have been called to stand up, as it were, "between the living and the dead," in defence of Christian principles. And although it be true that we have fought rather for our country than for our religion, yet it is also true that religion is, in present circumstances, identified, in a certain degree, with the existence of our country. And we trust that it is in the purpose of Providence, by saving the one, to save the other also.

Let this nation, then, weigh well what it is, in God's moral administration of the world, which saves *her* at this period. Let her beware of infidelity; and of that moral *taint* which ever accompanies it. Is it true that any of our chief men begin to "laugh at vice," like Voltaire! Let us recall to view the experience of France. We beheld infidelity gradually infecting that nation, even as poison passeth through the human frame, till the whole body of the great was saturated. Then was their iniquity full, and God's judgment began. Now, though it be true that the faith of our Church is pure, that "she holdeth the head," that she is

founded on the Prophets, Evangelists, and Apostles; though it be true that there is in the midst of her a large body of righteous persons, men possessing sound learning, enlightened zeal, and pure charity; men who are called by our Saviour “the light of the world,” and “the salt of the earth;” yet it is equally certain that the greater part of her members are not of that description. It is certain that the *spot* of moral disease begins to be visible at a distance. And we know not but that the true state of the nation may be this, that there is just “salt” enough (to use the figure of the Gospel) to preserve the body from corruption.

Let us then weigh well *what it is* which, in the present circumstances of the world, saves this nation. If it be the divine pleasure to save *us*, while other nations are destroyed, it cannot be on account of the *greatness of our empire*, or of our *dominion by sea*, or of our *extended commerce*. For why should the moral Governor of the world respect such circumstances as *these*? But if we are spared, it will be, we believe, on account of our *maintaining the pure religion of Christ as the religion of our land*, and *of our promoting the knowledge of that religion*, and *of the blessed principles which accompany it, throughout the rest of the world*. This may be a consideration worthy of the divine regard. And this, though it be no pledge of our duration, is the chief assurance of our perpetuity. On this chiefly (*viz.* our being an instrument of good to the world) must

depend our hope of surviving the shocks and convulsions which are now overwhelming the other nations of Europe.

Let us now recapitulate the evidences noticed in this discourse, which encourage us to believe that the time is come for disseminating the knowledge of Christianity in the heathen world.

1. The facility with which Christianity is propagated generally in Asia, wherever the attempt has been made.

2. The peculiar success that has attended our own endeavours to promote the religion of the Bible.

3. The conversion of illustrious persons in Asia, by means of the Bible alone.

4. The translation of the Bible into almost all the languages of Asia; promising, as it were, a second promulgation of Christianity to the East.

5. The general contemplation of the prophecies in Europe and Asia.

6. The general commotion among the bands of infidelity, who are hostile to the design, both in Europe and Asia.

7. The consent of good men, in all Christian nations, to promote the design. And,

8. The preservation of our own country, to carry on the work, amidst the ruin or infidelity of other nations.

Behold, then, my brethren, the great undertaking, for the promotion of which you are now assembled. If it were in the power of this assembly to diffuse the blessings of religion over the whole world, would it not be done? Would not all nations be blessed? You perceive that some take a lively interest in this subject, while others are less concerned. What is the reason of this difference? It is this: Every man, who hath felt the influence of religion on his own heart, will desire to extend the blessing to the rest of mankind; and no one who hath lived without a concern about religion, will be solicitous to communicate to others a gift which he values not himself. At the same time, perhaps, he is not willing to be thought hostile to the work. But there is no *neutrality* here. "He that is not with Christ," in maintaining his kingdom on earth, "is against Him." And so it appeareth to "God, who searcheth the heart." Every one of us is now acting a part in regard to this matter, for which he must give an account hereafter. There is no one, however peculiar he may reckon his situation or circumstances, who is exempted from this responsibility. For this is the criterion of obedience in the sight of God, even our conduct in receiving or rejecting the "record which God hath given of his Son." And no man "receiveth this record" in sincerity and truth, who will not desire to make it known to others. You have heard of the conversion of Mahometans and Hindoos. Yes, our Lord

hath said, “Many shall come from the East and
 “from the West, and shall sit down with Abraham,
 “and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of Heaven;
 “but the children of the kingdom shall be cast out.”

Begin, then, at this time, the solemn inquiry, not merely into the general truth of Christ’s religion, but into its divine and converting power. You observe that in this discourse I have distinguished between the *name* of Christianity and the *thing*. For it seems there are some who have departed from the ancient principles of our reformation, who admit the *existence* of the Spirit of God, but deny his *influence*; who agree not with the Apostle Paul, that the “Gospel cometh to some in *word* only,” and to others “in *power*, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance;” and who seem to forget what our Saviour hath said of the “*broad* road” and the “*narrow* way.” Begin, then, the important inquiry; for “the time is short,” and this question will soon be brought to issue before an assembled world. In the mean time I shall offer to you my testimony on this subject.

The operation of the grace of God, in “renewing
 “a right spirit within us,” (Ps. li.) is a doctrine professed by the whole faithful Church of Christ militant here on earth. The great Author of our religion hath himself delivered the doctrine, in the most solemn manner to the world. “Verily, verily,
 “I say unto you, Except a man be born again, he

“cannot see the kingdom of God.” *Verily, verily;* it is an undoubted truth, an unchangeable principle of the heavenly dispensation, that, except a man be renewed in mind by the Spirit of God, he shall not have power even to *see* or behold the kingdom of God. What, though many in our day deny this doctrine? A whole nation denied a doctrine, greater, if possible, than this. The very name and religion of Christ have been denied in our time. But if our Saviour hath declared any one doctrine of the Gospel more clearly than another, it is this of a spiritual conversion; and the demonstraton of its truth is found in all lands where his Gospel is known.* Christians, differing in almost every thing else, agree in this. Differing in language, customs, colour, and in country; differing in forms of worship and Church government, in external rites and in internal order; they yet agree in the doctrine of a change

* The late learned and judicious PALEY has given his dying testimony to the truth of this doctrine. (See his Sermons, p. 119.) “A change so entire, so deep, so important as this, I do allow to be a CONVERSION; (he had said before, ‘there must be a revolution of principle; there must be a revolution within;’) and no one who is in the situation above described, *can be saved*, without undergoing it; and he must necessarily both be sensible of it at the time, and remember it all his life afterwards. It is too momentous an event ever to be forgot. A man might as easily forget his escape from shipwreck. Whether it was sudden, or whether it was gradual, if it was effected (and the fruits will prove that), it was a *true conversion*; and every such person may justly both believe and say it himself, that he was converted at a particular assignable time.”

Paley here speaks the language of the true Church of Christ, in all ages and nations.

of heart, through faith in Christ; for this hath been the grand characteristic of Christ's religion among all nations, tongues, and kindreds, where the Gospel hath been preached, through all ages down to this day. This is, in fact, that which distinguishes the religion of God, in Asia, from the religions of *men*. In every part of the earth where I myself have been, this doctrine is proclaimed, as the hope of the sinner and the glory of the Saviour. And again, in every place it is opposed, in a greater or less degree, by the same evil passions of the human heart. In rude nations, the same arguments are brought against it, in substance, which are used here in a learned country. Among ignorant nations, a term of reproach is attached to serious piety, even as it is here among a refined people; *thereby proving* what our Lord hath taught, That the superior goodness inculcated by his Gospel would not be agreeable to all men; and that some would "revile and speak "evil of his disciples, for righteousness' sake;" *thereby proving* what the Apostle Paul hath taught, That "the Cross of Christ is an offence" to the natural pride of the human heart; that "the carnal mind is "enmity against God;" and that "the natural man "receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, because they are spiritually discerned."