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Convention Sermon.

Christian Fruitfulness, the Great
Design of Christian Life.

THE SERMON PREACHED BEFORE THE
CONVENTION AT MONCTON, ON
LORD'S DAY, AUGUST 24TH 1884.

BY REV. C. GOODSPED, A. M.

I am the vine, ye are the branches. . . .
Herein is my Father glorified that ye bear
much fruit, and so shall ye be my disciples.
—John 15: 5, 8.

Here is a great country; it stretches
over hundreds of miles of hill and
dale; homesteads dot all the land;
busy hands have been everywhere at
work; warm and frequent showers have
fallen; the bright, growthful sunshine
has poured down and has flooded all
the country. As the late summer and
autumn have now come on, the earth
is weighed down with the burden of
its growth and fruitage. The thick
standing timothy and clover sway like
the waves of the sea breeze, and await
the mower's scythe; the heavy grain
is becoming golden over all the country;
grapes are hanging in luscious clusters
from the vines; apples, and pear, and
peach, are turning ruddy, and russet,
and brown, on the bending boughs,
amid the dark green foliage.

What sight more cheering and
beautiful than this of a fertile land in
all the glory of its varied and abun-
dant fruitfulness!

But there is more than beauty in a
sight like this. There are myriads of
men, women and children scattered
thinly over the country in quiet farm
houses, and crowded thickly in town
and city. But whether they toil under
the open sky or hillside and meadow,
or over ledgers and beside counters, in
the shade of shop and store, or in the
clatter and clang of hammer and forge,
the river of prosperity, if it is to reach
them, must be fed by springs which
gush forth from these fruitful fields.
And so, while we are pleased by the
beauty of the land as it rolls in the
richness of its fruitage, let us offer up
devout thanksgiving because there is
thus laid a solid foundation for general
prosperity, and there is thus afforded
the sinews of the nation's resources and
strength.

But while the material world has its
beauty and charm, and has a high
place in the work and gifts of God,
there is a world which is higher, one
whose bloom and fruitage are both
more beautiful, and of vaster import-
ance. I refer, of course, to the world
of human existence, with its powers of
body, its fibrous will, its soaring thought,
its thrilling emotions, and its spiritual
yearning. It is to fruitfulness in this
realm that I propose to call your
attention—fruitfulness of a soulful,
throbbing life, in all its possession and
possibility of subtle, far-reaching,
eternal influence.

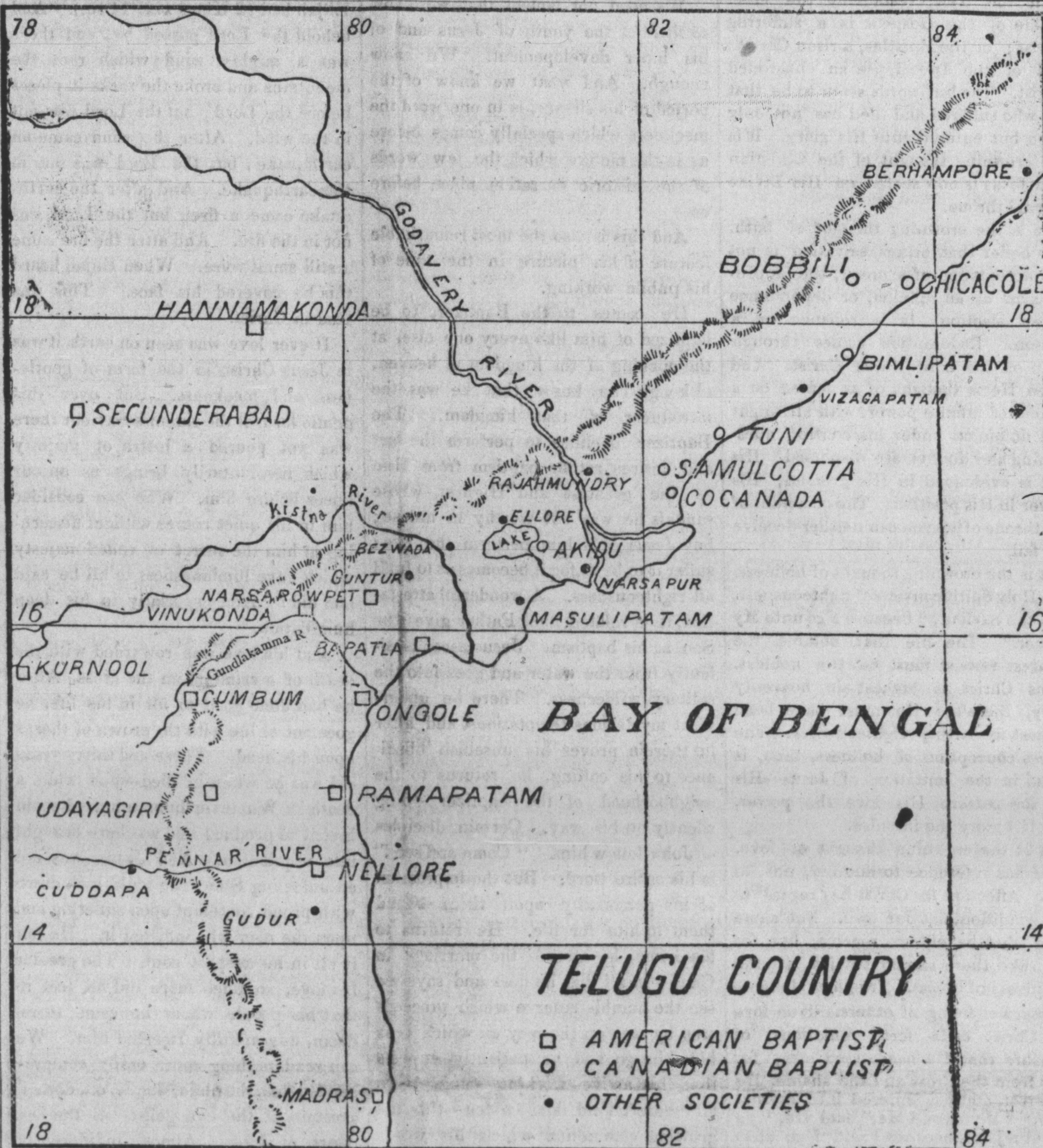
I. WHAT IS THE NATURE OF CHRIS-
TIAN FRUITFULNESS AS SUGGESTED
BY THE COMPARISON OF THE TEXT?
Look at the vine. There is a cen-

tral cane from which the branches
shoot forth. On the branches are
dark green leaves. If the vine be
fruitful, and it is the proper season,
bunches of luscious grapes hang from
the branches, and peep out from the
rich foliage. What purpose does each
part serve? Through a thousand
tiny rootlets with open mouths, the root
is gathering nourishment to promote
the growth and fruitfulness of the vine.
The stock is to convey the food from
the root to leaf, and shoot, and fruit,
and to afford support to foliage and
cluster. The rustling leaves are
drinking in nourishment from the air,
as the root is gathering it from the
soil. The object of all these is the
growth of the vine. But what of the
fruit? Unlike root and leaf, and
branch, and stock, which are necessary
to the existence and growth of the
plant, you can pluck the fruit, and the
vine will still grow on. You can
prevent its fruiting, and it will still
exist, and flourish all the more, perhaps.
The fruit serves no purpose in the
tree or plant which produces it. It is
that which the tree or plant produces
for the use of some other existence
than its own.

Here then we have the central idea
of fruitfulness. It is to do for others,
to produce what shall be of service to
others. It is to live a life which shall
be like a gushing spring, sending forth
streams to refresh and make fruitful.
It is not a life like a salt lake which
gathers in the crystal streams from the
mountain sides, only to hold and keep
them.

A man seeks salvation for the sake
of the deliverance it brings to himself
from danger and dread. He is not
troubled so much at his own worldliness
and carelessness and sin, because his
usefulness is thus spoiled and his life
made, perhaps an injury: his chief
concern is lest such a life throws
doubt upon the reality of his hope, and
disturbs his selfish satisfaction in his
sense of personal security. He attends
upon the preaching of the gospel, not
to have his interest deepened in the
welfare of others, and to be stimulated
and instructed to live such a life, as
shall be most mighty to move others to
seek their eternal good, but to have his
confidence strengthened in his own
security, and to be comforted and made
happy. When the prayer meetings of
the church are full of life and all are
rejoicing, he is found among his
brethren to have his share, but when
the days are dark, and souls are
burdened by anxiety and despondency,
he is never at hand to bear his part.
He ever has the first thought for him-
self—his own good, his own safety, his
own pleasure. Need I say that such a
life as this has not in it the principle of
christian fruitfulness.

But here is a christian of another
type. He is so absorbed in the well-
fare of others, he has little space even
for the joyful thought of his own
blessedness in Christ. If he does
think of it, it is to send up increase
of praise to God, if he does it is to
have his soul stirred to deeper pity
for those who have no such glad hope,
and to be incited to more earnest effort
on their behalf. If he struggle against
sin, and struggle he will, it is not
merely through fear of personal conse-
quences, but because he does not wish
to offend against God's love and grieve
his Spirit, and curse others by the blight
of a bad life. Does he seek the joy of
fellowship with God in worship? It is
not merely for the sake of the pleasure
it is to himself, but because he knows,
through boundless condescension, it
is pleasing to the Most High. His
prayers are not only full of petition
and thanksgiving for his own blessing
and blessedness, but much more the
outgo of longing for the salvation of
the lost, and the growth of others in
grace. He cannot rest in the mere



A Map of the Telugu Country

Now occupied by the Baptists of the Maritime Provinces, the provinces of Ontario and Quebec, and the American Baptist Missionary Union. It was prepared by the Rev. John Craig, who has kindly permitted us to use the plate for the benefit of our readers.

It may interest many to know that within the triangle formed by Chicacole, Bobbili and Bimlipatam, with the regions beyond, accessible to our missionaries, a million of people may be approached by the Gospel of Jesus. What a vast field for missionary effort!

The stations of the Maritime Provinces are:

BIMLIPATAM, occupied by Rev. R. Sanford, Mrs. Sanford, (now in Nova Scotia,) four preachers, one colporteur, and two teachers.

CHICACOLE, Rev. J. R. Hutchinson, four schools, two colporteurs.

BOBBILI, Rev. G. Churchill and Mrs. Churchill, (now in Nova Scotia,) Rev. I. C. Archibald, Mrs. Archibald, two native preachers, one colporteur, one Bible woman.

The stations of the Upper Provinces are:

Cocanada, Mr. and Mrs. Timpany, Miss Frith, three native preachers, nine teachers, two colporteurs, and one Bible woman.

Tuni, Rev. George Currie and Mrs. Currie, (now in this country,) two school teachers, four preachers, and three Bible women.

Akidu, Rev. John Craig, (in Canada,) one ordained preacher, eight unordained preachers, one Bible woman, and eleven school teachers.

Samulcotta, Rev. Mr. McLaurin and Mrs. McLaurin, Theological Seminary.

thought of his own security while he
sees others in such deadly peril. His
thought ever is, how can I please God
most and make others better and hap-
pier by my powers of heart and mind
and body, and by all that I possess, as
he gives forth to all in the reach of his
influence, the ardor of his love, the
striving of his thought, the expendi-
ture of his means, and the strength
of his whole life. O, brethren, this is
fruitfulness toward God and men. It
is such lives as these which pour out
the richness of strength and power into
the empty treasury of the world, which
drop their luscious fruitage into the
thin lips of famine-stricken souls,—it
is such lives as these that stretch their
blessings across time and eternity,
which are fruitful in the christian sense.

And so of a fruitful church. If they
have a fine place of worship, it is not to
have the name of possessing the best
house in town, and to attract the rich
and proud, but to show respect for God,
and to draw men to hear the gospel.
They call a pastor not to tickle itching
ears, and fill up the pews to increase
the income of the church, or have the
name of possessing an eloquent preacher;
but they seek a man who can minister
to hungry souls, who can lead them up

to higher heights of attainment in
character and usefulness, and help
them in their aggressive war on the
empire of sin and misery—a man full
of the Holy Ghost and of power to
preach the old gospel, which breaks
the fetters from the slaves of sin, and
which gives hopes which send their
streaming brightness across the dark
chasm of death, out into the everlast-
ing beyond. They are not satisfied with
building up the church at home, but
take the world into their broad sym-
pathies, and are ready to labor, and
pray, and give, to send the gospel and
its life and light to the ends of the
earth. The church which is fruitful is
like a city set on a hill, whose light
cannot be hid, but shines across hill,
and dale, and sea. Its fruitage like
the very grapes of Eschol, fall into the
parched lips of men and women, who
are dying on heathen shores, as well as
in their own city, or town, or village.
How grand a church thus fruitful! How
blessed to live in this age when
the electric currents of all our influence
may touch and thrill and vivify so
widely!

But we must hasten and notice again.

II. THIS FRUITFULNESS IS THE CHIEF

END OF EXISTENCE.

Go back again to the vine, the

comparison of the text. It may grow
luxuriantly. Its stock may send forth
vigorous branches and these produce
abundance of leaves. It may spread
over a broad trellis and even produce
blossoms in profusion. But unless the
clusters of grapes form and ripen, it has
failed of the purpose of its existence.
From the time the little germ wrapped
up in the tiny seed began to grow, it
has been with a view to fruit. It sent
up its shoot, and took on woody fibre to
provide support for the clusters to
come. During the years as it grew
thicker and branches shot forth from
the axis of the leaves, it has been
laying up a store of strength for
fruitage. To gather the elements to
be elaborated into grapes it has spread
its leaves to the sky and its rootlets in
the earth. In this all parts unite and
there is not a single tremulous leaf or
fibrous rootlet which does not do its
part. In the effort to produce fruit,
the plant sacrifices itself. To this, it
need be, the plant sacrifices itself,
and many of them die in the effort.
Those which do not die, begin at once
to gather up material and strength for
a renewed fruitage in a coming season.
To produce fruit is the plant's highest
destiny, its chief end.

And is it not equally true that
christian fruitfulness, as we have at-
tempted to describe it, is the chief
end of the christian life? Unless the
christian life result in this, does it
not miss of its true purpose, and is it
not a failure? We have God's an-
swer in Hosea 10: 1, "Israel is an
empty vine." Jehovah says, Why is it
that Israel is thus declared to be a fail-
ure. The reply is, "He bringeth forth
fruit unto himself." He does not pro-
duce anything for others than himself.
He is wrapped up in selfishness. He is a
great Dead Sea, which receives, but
does not send forth any stream. Nay
it is not the chief purpose of exist-
ence to seek our own salvation and
then live for self, if this were possible.
We exist for a higher end than to
make money to board or spend upon
ourselves, to labor in order to gain
applause or to pass life in ease and
pleasure. From the first throb of life
to its highest growth into the fulness
of stature of men and women in
Christ Jesus, fruitfulness—to be of
service to others,—is the chief end of
existence. Our chief regard must not
be bound down to plough, or hammer,
or plane, or yard stick, or ledger or
business, or book. All the toil of
hand and brain, all the strength of
life with its manifold forces and powers,
the least as well as the greatest, and
the greatest as well as the least, and
all the yearning and striving and bat-
tling of the spirit with its emotions
and affections, must be concentrated
upon fruitfulness—the welfare of others
—as our highest aim. But we must
live, some one may say. Yes, the
vine must live, because its life is ne-
cessary to its fruitfulness. Its vigor
and health and strength must be at-
tended to, but with a view to the largest
growth of grapes. And so must we
attend to body and mind and spirit, be-
cause their health and strength and
vigor are necessary to fruitbearing.
But this is far different from living to
live, just as eating to live differs from
living to eat. Our Lord gives us solemn
instruction and warning here in this
parable, as well as that of the barren
fig tree. The lesson is that fruitfulness
is the only justification for the existence
of the tree. If it is barren, it has failed
to accomplish the end of its being, and
if it is hopelessly barren, it is to be
cut down as a useless burden upon
the soil. Let us lay to heart this truth
that to live to do good is the great end
which God has in creating us, and if
we fail in this, so matter how much we
may seek for ourselves, our lives are
but a burden, and it is only because of
the long suffering of God that they are
prolonged.

It would be strange indeed, were
fruitfulness not the great end of exis-
tence. Suffering and misery are all
around us. Poverty oppresses. Vice
binds its victims with burning bell-
forges, fetters. Disease preys upon
quivering nerves. Women weep, child-
ren moan, and stout hearts break.
Everywhere men are shadowed by the
awfulness of the existence which is
eternal, facing a future which encloses
in its depths issues untold. All around
us lives are going out in darkness, and
thousands are dancing down the broad
way toward the eternal destruction
which is at its end. At home, abroad,
in city and town and country place, in
jungle and in plain, there are myriads
who are in pressing need of rescue, as
the swift current of time is hurrying
them on into the wrath to come. Yes,
it would be strange if a good God should
place us here and save us, and permit
us to steel our hearts against the appeal
for sympathy, to close our ears to the
great wail of the world's woe and de-
spair, and to go on satisfied with our
own security, and wrapped up in our
own prosperity. To permit us, sur-
rounded as we thus are with such great
(Concluded on 4th page.)