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REV'DS. I. E. BILL & R. THOMSON,

"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth Peace, good will toward Men."

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WORK WHILE IT IS DAY.

Up Christian, up! and sleep'st thou still,
 Daylight is glorious on the hill!
 And far advanced, the sunny glow
 Laughs in the joyous vale below;
 The morning shadow, long and late,
 Is stretching o'er the sun dial's plate.
 And are thine eyes, sad waker, say,
 Filled with the tears of yesterday?
 Or lowers thy dark and anxious brow
 Beneath to-morrow's burden now?
 New strength for every day is given—
 Daily the manna fell from heaven?
 Link by link the chain is made,
 Pearl by pearl the costly braid;
 The daily thread of hopes and fears
 Weaves up the warp of many years:
 And well thy labour shall have sped,
 If well thou weav'st the daily thread.
 Up, Christians, up! thy cares resign!
 The past the future, are not thine!
 Show forth to-day thy Saviour's praise,
 Redeem the course of evil days;
 Life's shadow, in its lengthening gloom,
 Points daily nearer to thy tomb!

Miss M. A. S. Barber.

THE INTRODUCTORY SERMON,

Preached by the REV. I. E. BILL, before the Western Baptist Association of New-Brunswick, in the Baptist Chapel, St. George, September 5th, 1853; and published by their special request.

Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few: Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest."—Matt. ix. 37, 38.

INTRODUCTION.

Prayer, my brethren, is one of the golden links which connects us with the spirit world, and which binds us in close and intimate association with the Invisible One. It recognises a principle of entire dependance which is universally felt. If proud man would in the rebellion of his heart, expel from his soul all consciousness of dependance upon the infinite mind, he cannot do so. It exists in spite of himself, and it pervades the unnumbered myriads of our race under all the diversified circumstances of their being. Men of every nation, of every tribe, and of every religious system, yield the homage of their supplications. Go to heathen nations, and there you see gorgeous temples erected, costly altars established, around which millions assemble in humble prostration to present their prayers. There may be as many Gods as there were in ancient Athens; and, altars with this inscription, "To the unknown God." Yet, amidst all this diversity of religious sentiment the incense of prayer is offered.

To address a superior power is an impression just as natural to the human heart as the idea of the existence of Divinity. The moment we acknowledge there is a God, that moment we must, as a matter of necessity, feel our dependance upon him. Amid the wild and fearful waste of troubled waters, the mariner addresses himself to the great ruling spirit of the tempest. The warrior as he rushes into the heat of battle invokes God for the sake of his country's honor, to conduct him to a glorious victory. The wild man of the forest as he wanders in lonely deserts in search of game, no sooner hears the sound of distant thunder than he cries to the Great Spirit to save him from impending danger.

Brothers, prayer is an instinct which God has implanted in man's moral nature, and it must live there. The principalities and powers of evil may seek to crush it, to annihilate it, but it is still there. You must blot out the last trace of moral sensibility from the

soul before you can destroy it. Pagans, Mahomedans, Infidels, all, all pray.—Amid the swelling tide of worldly prosperity man may regard prayer as unworthy of the independence of his character; but let the crushing power of affliction and adversity come upon him, and he instinctively invokes aid from an energy superior to himself.

Shall those whose minds are darkened by the God of this world, whose souls have never been illuminated by the revelations of God's book, pray; and shall we who have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the world to come restrain prayer? Brethren, if we are regardless of this duty the very stones would cry out against us. It is upon this principle of entire dependance for success in all the departments of human thought and labor that prayer is enjoined; and in no relation does man feel this dependance so much as in reference to the progress of religious truth in his own soul or in the souls of others, and hence from the earliest ages of time there has been one constant tide of intercession going up from the hearts of God's witnesses to the eternal hills for grace to help in time of need.

The Saviour enjoined it not as a new command upon his disciples; but as one which had been obligatory upon his children from the beginning; but he gave additional force to an old precept by imparting to it the weight of his own authority and example. He gave his infant Church to understand that prayer was the very soul of Christianity, that there could be no true religion without it. If the sick were to be healed, if devils were to be cast out, and the dead raised up, these things could alone be done in answer to prayer. This kind goeth not out but by fasting and prayer, was his emphatic reproof to his disciples on one occasion, and that admonition contains a principle of universal application, in respect to all the efforts of the Christian Church. If she would multiply her converts, enlarge her borders, spread through every clime the glories of her risen Lord,—upturn the throne of iniquity and establish the dominion of eternal truth throughout all the earth, she must be impressed with a consciousness of the obligations which rest upon her, to present united, persevering, believing prayer to the throne of the heavenly grace, giving Jehovah no rest until he shall establish Jerusalem and make her the praise of the whole earth.

This duty is solemnly urged in the language of my text. "The harvest is plenteous, the laborers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest." The prominent feature of the text is the obligation that rests upon the Church to pray for a given object here stated, and for reasons which are here enjoined.

1st. The object is, that God would multiply labourers to gather in the ripening harvest.

2nd. The reasons are, the harvest is plenteous and the labourers are few.

How important the object. What is the harvest? Is it to gather in the product of lands which we have cultivated, and of seed which we have sown? Nay, my brethren. The language is figurative, and has reference to the great harvest of deathless souls, which Jehovah designed from the eternal ages to gather to himself. He saw them ruined, lost, undone. The great adversary had succeeded in drawing them away from their just and proper allegiance to their rightful Sovereign, in consequence of which they were the subjects of a fearful condemnation, and exposed to eternal burnings; but Jehovah resolved to save them, and for this purpose had commissioned his Son to leave the blissful associations of the heavenly world, and to tread those lower grounds of sin and guilt, that he might here unfold God's commands, open up the wellsprings of life eternal, blot out the dark cata-

lounge of human offences, and re-establish his dominion in the soul of man.

In accordance with this arrangement, the Son of God took upon him the seed of Abraham, was made flesh, and dwelt for a time in these regions of moral death. His mission had reference emphatically to the fulfilment of the law which man had broken, and to paying the penalty which he had incurred. But it was not enough that this should be done. Agencies must be employed to make this known. Christ crucified was ordained by God as the foundation of human hope, and as the chief corner stone upon which a vital saving christianity should rest, hence this truth must be proclaimed. These tidings must be announced. The Saviour could not perform this work in harmony with existing arrangements beyond a given time. True, while he tabernacled among men he was incessantly engaged in unfolding the great scheme of redeeming mercy. His first text was one of thrilling import. One almost imagines that he sees him as he enters the temple, quietly taking his seat, and reading from the evangelical prophet amid the solemn gaze of the assembled multitude. "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach glad tidings to the meek, &c. &c." His own hallowed spirit had touched the soul of the Prophet, unveiled to him visions of future glory, and guided his pen as he recorded that deeply interesting passage; and now when he comes with messages of grace to man, he selects this as the text from which he preaches his first Sermon. O! brethren, what a profound stillness was in that temple, what an awful solemnity pervaded that crowd as they listened, to this unearthly messenger giving utterance, to the sublime truths of man's redemption, by the efficacious blood of the cross. From that time until he closed his career upon Calvary, he was the constant preacher of righteousness. How sublime, how melting, how terrible, how glorious were the disclosures which he made of truths which had been hidden in the secret recesses of eternity. He spoke of holiness and sin, of God and man, of life and death, of time and eternity, of heaven and hell, in a way they had never been spoken of before. The people were astonished at his doctrine, for his word was with power. His enemies went from his presence exclaiming, "never man spake like unto this man." Had he thought proper to do so, he could have continued this labor—nay, during the three short years of his Ministry he could have traversed as with lightning speed every region of the globe, carrying to every Son and daughter of Adam the saving knowledge of his grace, sweeping from earth every vestige of pollution and guilt, and transforming our downtrodden world into one vast temple of purity and praise; but it was not so decreed. The work was to be done, but not just in this way. He must accomplish his measure of suffering and then return to his native dwelling place, to be enthroned in majesty and in glory at the right hand of his Father; and other agencies must be employed to perform the work. True, his own omnipotence was sufficient to gather in the harvest without the aid of human instrumentalities. He had only to sit upon the circle of the heavens and issue the mandate and the rushing tides of iniquity would be stayed in their progress. He had only to utter his voice from his high and holy dwelling place, and all nations would start from the slumber of ages to obey his command. But frail humanity was to be honored and dignified by being invested with his authority to go forth as co-workers with him in prosecuting the designs of eternal mercy in the salvation of the world. Wondrous story of the part of divinity! Amazing exaltation in respect to man! But so it is, the treasure is committed to earthen vessels. It pleased God by the

foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. We are labourers together with God. Paul plants, Apollos waters. Redeemed men go forth weeping, bearing precious seed, and return again with rejoicing bringing their sheaves with them. Hence, the direction in my text,—"Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest."

II. We notice the reasons assigned, why we should thus pray.

1st. The harvest is plenteous. We understand by this that a large amount of work was to be done. The Redeemer thoroughly understood this fact. Hitherto the religion of divine revelation had been confined within a limited circle. The Jews were the only nation that had received the inspired oracles. To them God had spoken at sundry times and in divers manners by the Prophets, and as a nation they had long enjoyed peculiar privileges; but they were a mere fraction of the race. The whole world with this solitary exception was in the arms of the wicked one.

But the middle wall of partition, which had stood for ages, was to be broken down, and the Gentile as well as the Jew must listen to the tidings of redemption by the blood of the cross. The gospel must now be preached to every creature. The Saviour beheld with the eye of omniscience, this field, stretching out before him in all its magnitude and extent. The numbers to whom the message of life must be proclaimed were not only beyond human computation, but they were in a condition of terrible apostasy, and ten thousand obstacles were rising up on all hands to impede the progress of the work which he had commenced. There were the Jews with their deep rooted prejudices against the new religion, all in arms against the despised Nazarine and his followers, and the myriads of Gentiles who were spread over every section of the globe were shrouded in the grossest darkness, and enslaved by the vilest superstitions. All forms of human governments were opposed to the introduction of the new faith, and all modes of religious worship then, in existence, were arrayed in deadly hostility against the infant church. Hence there came a cry from a myriad voices which waxed louder and still louder. Away with him! Away with him! Crucify him! Crucify him! But in full view of all this, the great work must be done. How vast the harvest! We are not surprised that the Saviour should instruct his disciples to pray for an increase of laborers.

But Brethren, is the work less now than it was then? The world is more than 1800 years older than it was then; but is it less sinful? Is it not still true, to an alarming extent, that the whole world lieth in wickedness? We would not undervalue the glorious things accomplished by Apostles and Martyrs, by Ministers and people, during these 1800 years of the existence of the Church. We rejoice to know that wonders have been wrought in the name of the Lord, and that unnumbered millions have been rescued from the vassalage of Satan, and have experienced the liberty of the sons of God. Many of them have died in the triumph of a glorious faith, and they are now wearing the wreath of victory upon their glorified brow; and many still live as God's witnesses upon the earth—so make mention of his name, and cry aloud from the heights of Zion, saying, "The Lord God omnipotent reigneth. But contemplate the Jewish nation, are they not still exclaiming as in days of old, "Away with him! Away with him! Let his blood be upon us and upon our children!" And are they not scattered and blasted by God's terrible wrath? Then think of the nations of idolatry, and let us remember, that notwithstanding the labors of past centuries, three-fourths of the entire population of the world are still idolaters.