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CLAIMS OF THE FOREIGN MISSION
FIELD ON STUDENTS:

A Paper

READ BEFORE THE ABERDEEN FREE CHURCH STUDENTS'
ASSOCIATION, AT THE CLOSING MEETING
OF SESSION 1870-71.

BY

JAMES ROBERTSON, A.M.,
PRESIDENT.

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CLAIMS OF THE FOREIGN MISSION FIELD ON STUDENTS.

WHEN the proposal that I should deliver a valedictory address was first made to me, I could not but feel reluctant to undertake the task at so advanced a period of the session. It has been quite unusual too, if I mistake not, to require the President to deliver such an address, and I must confess I decidedly prefer that custom. But logicians tell us there is such a thing as the exception proving the rule, and it was urged that there was enough in the present case to constitute it an exception, while it was also urged that the proposed address should be short. When to all these representations was added the very flattering manner in which the proposal was received by the Association, I could not but regard myself as again shut up to the necessity of composing an indefinite address on some indefinite subject. I thought it wise, however, while I felt specially honoured by your request, to respect the usual practice so far as to found my address on the special circumstances of the case, and thus to give practical effect to the hint thrown out by the kind and respected friend who brought the matter before you. I have, therefore, determined to bring under your notice very briefly the subject of Foreign Missions ; but I have no intention, even if I felt myself qualified, to attempt anything approaching a full discussion of this subject. I do not forget that I am

here simply as a member of an association to address my fellow-members, and having regard to the canon of propriety which enjoins that all things should "be done decently and in order," I cannot but feel that my subject, specially as being a practical subject, must be well grounded in our particular circumstances. Hence it will be readily perceived that I propose to direct attention to Foreign Missions as viewed from the stand-point of our Association.

Now, what is the character of the point of view thus supplied? What is the character of our Association? It may, I think, be described as twofold—*religious* and *intellectual*. To some it may appear proper that we should add to these the *social* characteristic, but it seems to me that, though so far distinct, it is too closely bound up with each of the other two to admit of a successful consideration apart from them.

Our Association, then, is a *religious* Association. I do not say that its aim is a strictly religious one, as if nothing but devotional exercises and kindred occupations had a place in its programme, but its aim may in a general way be described as religious, and its basis distinctly rests on religion. Take, for instance, our Rules, and read Nos. 2, 4, 6, and 7, and the point under consideration will be at once apparent. Nor can it be said that our theory differs from our practice. As a matter of fact, the basis of our Association is a bond already possessed before any one becomes a member, in being, if not members, at least adherents of a common Church. Take into consideration the actual composition of our Association, and is it not evident that, to a very great extent, the clerical and Divinity Hall elements are represented among us? Our meetings, too, are all conducted with special reference to religion; our proceedings are "sanctified by the Word of God and prayer"; our discussions are directed more or less to the religious side of the subjects we take up; and yet the social element

so predominates as to make all these influences tell directly and personally. Religion shows itself in our Association as all pervading; and thus influences us probably much more than we can well perceive. I do not know that I am so well qualified to speak on this subject as some others who have had much longer acquaintance with the Association, for owing to special circumstances to which it is unnecessary here to allude more distinctly, I had no acquaintance with it before my last session in Arts, and even then I attended only occasionally. This, however, I can with certainty affirm, that by myself the religious influences were felt, and have continued to be felt, I trust not without profit, nor can I doubt that many more are able to bear the same testimony. But our union here helps also to confirm us in the truth, and to increase our appreciation of the principles we profess, by keeping those principles distinctly before us; and thus the conservative influence of home and friends is to a considerable extent preserved. These principles, however, are not held up to us as a dead letter; nor as mere party badges; they are presented to us in their living power as embodying the truth of God, and thus favour personal religion. All this is very remarkably confirmed by the fact that, when the Commissioners from the General Assembly to enquire into the state of our Colleges were last in Aberdeen, they cordially congratulated the students on the possession of such an association, and, recognising it as a great power for good, expressed a strong desire for the formation of similar associations in Edinburgh and Glasgow.

But we are also an *intellectual* association. Composed, as our membership to so great an extent is, of students, it is only natural that on the religious basis there should be reared something so connected with our ordinary work, that our religious principles may be brought to bear more fully on

that work. Most of us are here to prosecute our studies,—studies, which to a great extent must engross our attention, and may, if not carefully guarded against, so engross us that not only will our religious principles suffer, but the very mental faculties we seek to expand, may become contracted, or, at least, be unequally, and therefore unsoundly developed. To present an antidote to all such tendencies, we endeavour, by papers on various subjects, not only to call forth the faculties that may be said to lie in abeyance during our ordinary studies, but also to give solidity to those studies. From contact with the noble minds of the past, we endeavour to derive all those lessons and impulses by which we, too, “may make our lives sublime.” Our subjects, therefore, have no very limited range, while in the discussion of them we present the advantages of a debating society, united to those of trustworthy personal advice. We have the opinions of youth corrected and confirmed by those of mature years, while every indulgence is given to, and every kindness shown to those whose opinions are the subject of animadversion. We may have a little lively polemic now and then to give zest to the proceedings; we may have very different opinions expressed on the same subject—take for instance the discussion of this session on “John Keble;” but the differences are so expressed as to help to bring out the various sides of the truth, and to avoid anything like a breach of Christian charity. Nor are our discussions to be regarded as superficial attempts on themes in themselves very important. It is true that there are often, if not always, points which one might wish to see more fully brought out, but, as a rule, dilettantism is not our fault. Our prizes are assigned not for merely relative merit, but for intrinsic excellence; and some of them, I am sure, would take no mean place in the literature of the day. One of my earliest recollections connected with this

Association is the thrilling effect of the Prize Essay among the Arts students for the session 1865-66 on the Ten Years' Conflict. I am quite sure that the description then given of the memorable scene of the 18th May, 1843, would compare not unfavourably with many of the thrilling speeches in the House of Commons.

The influences thus put in motion are not to be regarded as merely individual, for though no doubt the individuals concerned derive great benefit from our Association, the other members can not fail to reap the benefit of a good example, apart altogether from the question of lasting impressions. I am sure there are not a few of us who can look back on our connection with this Association as opening up to us many interesting questions, as introducing us to the right method of discussing religious questions, whatever our future may be; nay, I think it should not be forgotten that this Association may be made the beginning of very interesting and intimate relations between the future ministry and people of our Church.

Such, then, being the position occupied by us in this Association, let me now direct your attention for a little to the subject of Foreign Missions as viewed from this position. To even the most casual observer, Missions suggest many interesting inquiries; and, if this be so, how much greater should be our interest, who are united in an Association such as has been described? For do not these Missions present to us two sides corresponding to the two-fold character of our Association. They have an *intellectual* side. Of course, this is by no means their most important characteristic, but it is by no means the least important of the many aspects under which they may be viewed. It is characteristic of Christianity, as compared with the other religious systems of the world, that it contains no "mysteries" in the technical sense of that term,

that it has no esoteric, as opposed to an exoteric side, no popular, as opposed to a priestly side, but that its truths are open alike to sovereign and serf, to prince and peasant, and that it brings the same message to all. Proclaiming the grand truth of the common origin of mankind, and their common relation to a common God, it puts an end to all local and caste privileges, and asserts that in it there is "neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bond, nor free." Placing all men thus on a footing of equality, vindicating for each member of the family of man the right of private judgment, and appealing to the judgment of every man, its progress is that of intellectual freedom and mental growth. Along its path are strewed the trophies of a thousand battles, the spoils of the numerous and mighty giants that had long oppressed humanity. No sooner does it appear than superstition, ignorance, vice, oppression, in short all those influences that degrade humanity feel their power shaken, and their thrones "totter to the fall." The manacles of the slave are struck off, but the no less degrading manacles of mental serfdom also fall, and man comes forth, outwardly as well as inwardly, a "new creature." It is sometimes said that if Christ had appeared now, instead of almost nineteen centuries ago, his credentials must have been very different from what they then were; but this statement is an utter misconception of the real state of the case. For what, apart from Christianity, would have been the state of our world? Is not Christianity itself one of the most potent factors of human progress; has it not been the most potent instrument in bringing about the present state of advancement? When we have learned to separate it from all the other factors, and to estimate aright its force, then, perhaps, we may be able to give an opinion as to what the nineteenth century would require as the credentials of any heavenly messenger, but clearly

this is a problem quite beyond human powers. Christianity *cannot* be separated from the other factors in this way ; it is no isolated force that may at will be deducted from any given period of history ; its influence has permeated all history, wherever it has appeared, and its power to-day is as great as ever it was. Can we not point in our own day to thousands upon thousands who have reaped the benefit of its influence in this very matter of intellectual freedom ? Have we not seen a Madagascar very recently bursting the chains under which for ages it had lain ? Have we not seen the fetters of a down-trodden Spain boldly struck off ? Have we not seen the West African slave trade dried up ? And to what are we to refer all those movements and many more that might be added—if not to the emancipating spirit of Christianity. Who will venture to assert that many of the recent upheavings in European society, and especially those that have so elevated the masses of the people, are not due to the influence of this very power, that first proclaimed the universal brotherhood of man ? Distorted no doubt that influence may have become through the many other influences that have been mingled with it ; and therefore it would be unfair to regard all the circumstances connected with these political movements as the legitimate outcome of this power. Are not the excesses to be regarded rather as the death throes of the many headed monster—tyranny in its various forms—that has thus been met and overcome by Christianity ? Verily, Christianity has been a power in the earth. It would be utterly impossible to write the history of the past eighteen and a half centuries if Christianity were ignored ; far less could any historian pass it by in any accurate estimate of this present age. The conquests of Christianity have of late been immensely extended. India, China, South Africa, and the South Sea Islands have presented the first fruits of their spiritual in-

gathering ; nay, have we not in many of these cases seen an ingathering that seems to some extent commensurate with the meaning of the phrase—"the fulness of the Gentiles." Some of these cases, too, bring out very distinctly the fact that the rate of progress is likely to be not arithmetical, but geometrical, so that we may well expect still more wonderful changes. And if all this be so, surely it will be interesting to us, as members of this Association, to watch the progress of events that thus run parallel to our own efforts ; nay, let us not merely look on as interested spectators, but let us each one feel constrained to ask how we may most effectually promote these noble ends.

But many sciences have derived immense advantages from modern missions, and the cause of philanthropy has been greatly strengthened. "In many a land," says Dr. Mullens, "missionaries have been not only the first preachers of the Gospel of peace, the first who taught the ignorant to pray to a Father in heaven, the earliest teachers of sound morality, but also pioneers in true civilisation—able instructors in mechanical arts, and healers of the sick. They have offered no mean contribution to our knowledge of languages and to literature ; they have helped to found Universities, and systems of education ; they have fought hard battles with oppression and wrong. They have given to the world a hundred translations of the Word of God ; many languages they have written for the first time ; and for some people they have even framed the first codes of public law. Beholding their usefulness, and knowing their worth, the Christian Church will uphold its messengers of mercy as true benefactors of the world, and will glorify God on their behalf." Add to these the benefits this Mission movement has conferred on those who have taken part in it at home, and little more will be requisite in order to enlist interest in it, and secure sympathy with it, regarded as merely intellectual.

But Foreign Missions have a much more important side—they may be viewed as a *religious* movement. Here, too, they are well fitted to attract our attention as an Association. We have bound ourselves together to maintain our common principles as Free Churchmen ; but it is not because they are Free Church principles, but because we believe them to be the truth of God. It is this alone that gives them value, nay it is only the living power of truth that has kept our Association together, and brought it to its present flourishing condition. And is not the cause of Missions the cause of truth ? Is it not their aim to make known “the glorious gospel of the blessed God”—that very gospel on which all our hopes depend ? Do they not strive to rescue men from every form of soul-destroying falsehood, and to bring them under the power of saving truth ? May we not, therefore, regard them as fellow-workers with our Association, and ought we not therefore to see to it that in every possible way we promote them ?

I have spoken of the intellectual freedom brought to man by Christianity ; it may be difficult, alongside that, to trace accurately and distinctly its influence in effecting spiritual freedom, for the two go hand in hand. Nevertheless, they are distinct, so distinct that we are able to discern which of the two is the more important, for who would hesitate to give to the spiritual freedom the post of honour ? The religious aspect of Missions, however, is that aspect with which we are most familiar ; instead, therefore, of arguing it out at any length, I shall leave it to each one by himself to weigh the facts, and draw his own conclusions—merely reminding you that these facts, whether as regards the original character of Missions as seen in our great Mission Charter, or as regards the manner in which Missions are actually carried out—are accessible to any one who has any desire to be acquainted with them. Meantime, I prefer to view this matter practically.

We are here, a company of young men, preparing for life. We have banded ourselves together to attain certain objects, because we think these objects worth attaining. But these objects are being aimed at on a larger scale, and in a wider field, let us therefore beware of neglecting those who are thus fellow-workers with ourselves. We love our religion, and because we love it, we aim at conserving it ; those who work in the Mission field, also love that religion, and because they do so, they strive to make it aggressive. But these two characteristics of religion are so closely united, that the one involves the other. Can we then refuse our sympathy to those who, equally with ourselves, strive to carry into practice the spirit of our religion ?

We are here to acquire useful knowledge, to have our faculties trained, our minds developed ; but our aim is not the pursuit of pleasure, is it not rather the fulfilment of high and important duty ? We realise the necessity of a training such as this, in order that we may acquit ourselves as men, and be able to fulfil the various duties of our station. But the advance of sound learning shows nothing more distinctly than the interdependence of man and man, nation and nation ; hence plainly arises the feeling that in this matter of education, whether as individuals or as nations, man cannot be alone. And is it not one of the great objects, as it has been one of the leading results of the spread of Christianity, to educate the world ? Do we not owe to it the very opportunity we are here availing ourselves of ? Can we then so defeat the object thus aimed at by Christianity, as to make the education we owe to it, a mere instrument of selfishness ? Shall we not rather remember the debt we owe, and the manner in which that debt is to be paid ? Shall we not rather identify ourselves with this movement ? Shall we not specially sympathise with those who are engaged in the front of the

battle, who, amid many difficulties, serve as the advanced guard of Christianity in its struggle with the world's ignorance? To say the least, the cause of Missions demands, even on this account, our deepest sympathy.

But I address those who are here to prepare for life. Before many of us, life lies like a tract of country that has never been explored; to others it may have been already slightly mapped out, so as to show at least the principal roads that run through it; while others may have made up their minds as to the road they ought to take in their journey. The subject I have endeavoured to bring before you this evening, leads us to a point where two of these roads meet; for it is a practical subject, and therefore calls for a decision. I have been pleading for sympathy with Foreign Missions; and I do so all the more earnestly because I fear all of us have yet much to learn as to our duty in this matter, and much to unlearn that we have gathered from neglect or indifference to it. This sympathy may vary as to the way in which it is expressed, but it must not vary in kind, and I think ought not to vary in degree. It may be cherished alike in both the ways to which I have referred; it may be expressed in a life given to the work of Missions, or in an earnest support of them in other ways.

No doubt there are among us some, perhaps many, who will make choice of the latter course, and I have no objection to make to their decision. All honour, all success to them in whatever worldly calling they may see it their duty to engage; but let me entreat them to remember that, by engaging in such work, they do not get rid of their obligations as Christians. Let me remind them that to them belong the sacred duty and the solemn responsibility of providing the outward means by which Christianity is to be spread abroad. But their support must be twofold; it must be spiritual as well as

temporal ; by prayer as well as by substance. Let them see to it that the principles they have pledged themselves to as members of this Association have their legitimate influence in guiding their lives, and the support I have claimed will be easily obtained. Nay, I cannot but regard it as a very important question for all such, how far, even as men of business, they can make their calling directly subservient to the advancement of Missions. How many of the hindrances to Mission operations arise from the conduct of those who, in an unchristian spirit, pursue their worldly callings ? How many difficulties of this sort might be expected to disappear were Missionaries supported in foreign lands by the presence of God-fearing men of business ?

Of those who choose the other path, and give themselves to this Mission movement, some, perhaps many, will see it to be their duty to stay at home, and minister to the flock of Christ in this land. These may not seem directly identified with Missions, and yet when we recall the twofold character of Christianity as conservative and aggressive, we shall find it difficult to dissociate this class from them. On all such much will depend. The purse may be in the hands of the people, but assuredly the ministers hold the purse-strings. Open the heart, and the hand cannot remain closed ; let the heart be enlarged, and there will be few complaints as to niggardly contributions. And is it not the great aim of all our preaching to bring religion thus home to the heart ? Let it flourish in the heart, and it will speedily flourish outwardly. Let me, therefore, bespeak your earnest sympathy with those who work far afield ; let me entreat you not to relegate special mention of them to a collection day once a year, or some such rare occasion. Let me entreat you to make the Foreign Mission field far more familiar than it is now to the great body of our congregations, so that while we who labour in

distant lands get your pecuniary support, we may have the infinitely higher comfort of knowing that our case is borne on the hearts of the people before God. I cannot doubt but that if our congregations at home would thus fully identify themselves with the efforts of Missionaries, and the aggressive character of Christianity were thus fully realised, not only would the returns on the foreign field be immensely increased, but the condition of our Churches at home would be much more healthy.

A word more, and I have done. I should have spoken of those who may have seen it their duty to give themselves entirely to the work of Foreign Missions, (and I fondly trust there may be some of whom this is true), but I prefer calling attention to this field as the object of choice. There may be those among us who, though earnestly desiring to serve God in the Gospel of His Son, have given little attention to the thought of going abroad, or who may be inclined to think they may be more useful at home. I have not the slightest wish to urge any one to go abroad, for I firmly believe in the principle, "Let every man be persuaded in his own mind;" but I may be allowed to point to the fact that we have now so many preachers at home, and the equally prominent fact that there is a great and felt want abroad—such a want as may utterly cripple the operations already in existence, to say nothing of defeating all attempts at aggression. Let me remind you of the command, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature." Let me recall to your thoughts the myriads of souls now perishing for lack of knowledge; let me call to your remembrance that petition in the prayer we learned in earliest infancy—"Thy kingdom come"; and let me suggest how possible it is that we by our negligence or faintheartedness are now preventing the answer. Let all this be fully realised, and let it be fairly

balanced against the claims of home, and whatever the result may be, we shall at least realise that we are all Missionaries, —a “band of brothers” fighting for a common cause, striving for a common end, serving one Master, expecting one reward.

And whatever our occupation, be it missionary, pastoral, or secular, let us one and all recognise the obligation we are under to make known to others the light we ourselves enjoy. It has become precious to our own souls ; be it ours therefore to make it known to others that they too may rejoice in this salvation. Shall we, can we refuse to do so ? Shall we, can we keep aloof from those who are working for this glorious end ? Shall we not rather be found with those grand words of the “Missionary Hymn” on our lips, and in our hearts—

“ Shall we whose souls are lighted
 With wisdom from on high ;
 Shall we to men benighted
 The Lamp of Life deny ?
 Salvation ! oh, salvation !
 The glorious sound proclaim,
 Till each remotest nation
 Has learned Messiah's name.”



A BRIEF OUTLINE OF THE PLAN OF SALVATION.

IN OUR NATURAL STATE, we are—

Born in sin, - - - - -	Gen. ii. 3.
Under the curse, - - - - -	Gal. iii. 10;
	Lev. ii. 2.
As prisoners before the bar of God, condemned eternally, - - - - -	John iii. 18;
	Rom. vi. 19-23.

OUR SALVATION IS—

Not of works, - - - - -	Tit. ii. 3.
It is by grace through faith, - - - - -	Eph. ii. 8.
And those who go through ordinances appointed by Christ himself, - - - - -	Rom. i. 16; Mark xvi. 16; 1 Cor. xi. 23-26; 1 Pet. i. 18, 19.

GOOD WORKS—

Are the evidence and fruits of faith, - - - - -	James ii. 17-20.
They do not precede justification, - - - - -	Rom. ix. 30-32.
They are not "the meritorious or procuring cause" of justification, - - - - -	Rom. xiii. 10.
But they follow justification, - - - - -	James v. 19-22.

JUSTIFICATION—

Frees the sinner from by nature sinful guilty before God's personal condemnation, - - - - -	Isa. lvi. 6; Hev. 17; Rom. viii. 1-4.
It is the act of God, - - - - -	Isa. i. 18, 19.
Not of works, - - - - -	Gal. iii. 11.

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