

**THE CHRISTIAN TRAVELLER: BEING AN
ACCOUNT OF THE COUNTRY AND ITS
PRODUCTS, OF THE
PEOPLE AND THEIR CONDITION; AND OF
THE MEASURES TAKEN FOR THEIR
RELIGIOUS AND SOCIAL BENEFIT**

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THE
CHRISTIAN TRAVELLER.

WESTERN AFRICA.

BEING
AN ACCOUNT OF THE COUNTRY AND ITS PRODUCTS;
OF THE PEOPLE AND THEIR CONDITION; AND OF
THE MEASURES TAKEN FOR THEIR RELIGIOUS AND SOCIAL BENEFIT.

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THE
CHRISTIAN TRAVELLER.

INTRODUCTION.
MISSIONS AND CIVILIZATION.



[Suttee—Burning of a Hindoo widow upon her husband's funeral pile. See p. 3.]

As the connexion between Christianity and Civilization will, in the course of the present work, frequently come under our notice, it seems well that we should, at the outset of our labour, make the reader acquainted with the view of this important matter which the Missionary Societies have taken, as well as with that which we have ourselves been led to entertain.

It is obviously of the utmost importance to know to what extent, in what manner, and on what principles, the various societies are prepared or not prepared to undertake, or to assist in, the civilization of those nations which, not less in a moral than in a spiritual sense, "sit in darkness and the shadow of death."

Now, the societies have been led by circumstances to make up their minds on the subject, and have been anxious to promulgate the views on which they have acted in this matter, and on which they still intend to act. Their several Secretaries must be considered as the organs of their opinions, and among them we find a remarkable unanimity in the principal conclusions—that civilization, beyond a certain limit, is not possible without Christianity—that Christianity inevitably leads to civilization—that civilization in itself is no necessary preparation to Christianity—and that, therefore, they will not attempt to prepare barbarous nations

for Christianity by civilization, but are willing to promote and foster civilization as an effect and consequence of Christianity.

In the year 1836 the Secretaries of the several Societies were examined before the Select Committee of the House of Commons, appointed to "consider what measures ought to be adopted with respect to the native inhabitants of countries where British settlements are made, and to the neighbouring tribes, in order to secure to them the due observance of justice and the protection of their rights; to promote civilization among them, and to lead them to the peaceful and voluntary reception of the Christian religion."

The important and valuable evidence given before this Committee, of which Mr. (now Sir) T. F. Buxton was chairman, will be of great service to us in the progress of this work. Among the witnesses examined were the secretaries of the various Missionary Societies. Mr. Dandeson Coates, the lay secretary of the Church Missionary Society, brought the matter forward in an able and luminous statement, to the principles contained in which the secretaries of the Wesleyan and London Societies declared their adhesion, and which they supported by a variety of arguments and illustrations. We will endeavour to produce the substantial matter of this truly "great argument," reserving the particular illustrations, to be produced as we come among the various nations by which they are supplied.

Mr. Dandeson Coates was asked—

"4376. Does your experience lead you to believe that it would be advisable to begin with civilization in order to produce Christianity, or with Christianity in order to lead to civilization?"

He answered—

"Most distinctly with Christianity in order to the civilization of a savage people, in any proper sense of the term civilization. Of course a good deal will depend upon what is meant by civilization. If civilization be intended to mean the moral and social improvement of a people, my opinion is distinctly that Christianity is the instrument by which to bring it about. I form this opinion from several reasons, derived partly from the nature of Christianity itself, and partly from the history of Christianity. I feel the question proposed to me by the Committee to be a very serious one, and therefore trust the Committee will extend their indulgence to me in attempting an answer to it.

"I think I should not do justice to a question of this gravity without first adverting (and I will do it very briefly indeed) to the reasons for the opinion, derived from the nature of Christianity itself: I find the preceptive part of Christianity tends to make men peaceable, honest, sober, industrious, and orderly. These, in my opinion, are the very elements of civilization, in the moral sense of it. I find in the Christian scheme the doctrines of man's fallen state through sin, redemption by Christ, renovation by the power of the Holy Ghost, and the great and awful sanction of an eternal judgment. Now it is clear to my mind that the impression of these great principles on the heart of man tends directly to make him humble, self-denying, philanthropic, beneficent, apart from the consideration of those effects of the doctrines which may be considered more strictly of a religious or theological kind. Those principles, I apprehend, cannot exist in force in any community without the moral and social well-being of that community being greatly promoted. I look again into the Christian scheme, and observe the very emphatic description of the Gospel: it is declared to be 'the power of God.' I think that the phrase must be understood to imply, in any reasonable interpretation of the words, a Divine influence accompanying the preaching of the Gospel. I see therefore in that an arrangement and process by which the human mind is to be operated upon in a more powerful manner than any other agency that can be imagined. I look further into the Christian scheme, and find it to be a revelation from God: now if God be, as the Bible teaches us that he is, supreme in benevolence and beneficence, as well as in power, wisdom, and knowledge, then I think the inference is most clear and irrefragable, that to bring that revelation to bear upon mankind is to promote their temporal welfare, as well as to provide for their eternal salvation. I very slightly allude to these important topics, because I am unwilling to trespass unnecessarily for a single moment on the time of the Committee; but, considering the extreme weightiness of the question, I think I should not have fairly brought it under the notice of the Committee without thus briefly referring to these considerations.

"But I pass to the second series of reasons—those which are derived from the history of Christianity. This is a branch of the subject of such immense extent that it would be quite impracticable for me to do more than to glance at it, in the most rapid way possible, on an occasion like the present. If I look at the state of the world when at the rise of Christianity it found Rome in the zenith of her power and glory, in the highest state of civilization, as civilization could exist in a heathen land, that mankind was ever advanced to, perhaps with the exception of Greece, which was already on the decline from her glory, and therefore I do not more particularly refer to Greece: in Rome at this period, among other practices which I will not dwell upon, that of

selling their prisoners of war into slavery prevailed, and that of exposing their prisoners of war in their public games. I find, too, in Rome, at that period, their gladiatorial games—man opposed to man in mortal conflict. And this is not an accidental occurrence, but an established order of things, exhibited, not in private, not only occasionally but habitually at their theatres, and to the most polished and distinguished of the whole population. What do I find at the expiration of a few ages? Christianity attains the ascendancy, and these things are extinct.

"I dwell on no other topic of ancient history, but come down to modern times. I contrast the state of the European nations with, I will not say, those of Africa, but with the more civilized nations of Asia; and here I trace a distinction so broad and obvious that it need not be insisted on. I see clearly that it is Christianity which has conferred upon the European nations this distinction.

"I would only attempt further to illustrate this bearing of the subject from three or four facts of a recent date. At a recent period suttee prevailed throughout our possessions in India; they are now prohibited. The voice of Christianity in this country unquestionably wrought the change. The abominable pilgrim-tax is suppressed in India by authority, and this was effected by the expression of Christian opinion and feeling in this country. I look back on the enormous evils of the slave trade; the slave trade is suppressed, and suppressed unquestionably by the force of Christianity in this country. I come to a still more recent period—a very recent one indeed: I see slavery abolished throughout the colonies, and that at the cost of 20,000,000*l.* of public money; the result, most unequivocally, of the state of Christian principle and feeling in the country—a national act, I will venture to affirm, unparalleled in the whole history of human legislation, the glory of which redounds exclusively to Christianity."

After this Mr. Coates proceeds to take up the question under a different aspect—namely, as illustrated by the effects of modern Protestant Missions. The evidence is clear under this head; but as it is derived from various nations which in due time we hope to visit, we shall not produce it in this place.

Finally, Mr. Coates was asked by Mr. Gladstone—

"4383. Although you laid the principal stress upon the introduction of Christianity, you do not overlook civilization, but you consider that civilization will be the natural companion and consequence of the effect of the introduction of Christianity?—Most certainly; and I am very glad the question has been put to me, because I rather feared that perhaps I had not distinctly conveyed my own impression upon that point in what I previously stated to the Committee. Though I have a very clear opinion as to the efficacy of Christianity as an instrument of civilization, I should not be disposed to represent Christianity as preceding civilization, because the moment Christian principle begins to bear upon the mind of man, from that moment his condition as a civilized being advances, and hence Christianity and civilization advance *pari passu*. It is therefore, I conceive, impossible that civilization should stand still, or not go on in its due ratio, so long as Christian principle is duly brought to bear upon the population.

"4384. Do you think they stand in the relation of cause and effect?—Precisely."

The Committee then desired to hear the sentiments, on this subject, of the Rev. John Beecham, one of the secretaries of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society. He said:—

"4385. My attention has been long directed to this subject, and the firm conviction of my mind that Christianity must precede civilization is the result of the inquiries and observation which I have made. So far has my experience been from proving that civilization is necessary to prepare barbarous nations for the reception of the Gospel, that it has led me to the conclusion that the only effectual way to civilize them is first to evangelize them. I regard Christianity as the parent of civilization, and am persuaded that true civilization cannot be produced without it; I say true civilization, because I am aware that a certain kind of civilization may exist unconnected with Christianity. I have heard reference made to ancient Greece and Rome, for the purpose of showing that there may be civilization without Christianity; but if all true civilization includes the humanities of life, then I must conclude that those celebrated nations had not attained unto it. When I look, for instance, at the theatres of Rome, and witness the gladiatorial shows and fights of men with wild beasts, which were there exhibited, and recollect that such spectacles of cruelty constituted the amusements of the Roman public; and when I moreover remember that in Rome there were no hospitals, no dispensaries, no almshouses, no asylums for the deaf and dumb and blind; in short, none of those humane and charitable institutions which adorn our own Christian land,—I cannot conclude that the civilization of the classic heathen was anything better than a splendid barbarism; and whatever may be advanced in its praise, I must still, notwithstanding, hold that true civilization,—the only kind of civilization that the Christian philanthropist can be supposed anxious to promote,—cannot be originated but by means of Christianity.

"4386. You are distinctly of opinion that the communication of Christianity must precede an attempt to convey civilization through the understanding of man merely?—Certainly.

"4387. Will you give the reasons why you think the plan of civilization cannot succeed?—I would assign two reasons. In the first place, the want of a suitable agency would alone go far to secure its failure. The mere civilizing plan does not in my opinion furnish motives powerful