QUESTION

Whether GOD is not Angry with the Country for doing so little towards the Conversion of the Indians?

This is spoken to in the following Discourse by the Reverend and Learned Mr. SOLOMON STODDARD of North-Hampson.

ROM. VIII. 19.
For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the Sons of God.

PETER tells us that in Paul's Epistles there be some things that are hard to be understood; and this verse and three following may well be accounted of that number. There are two Interpretations of this Text and Context, arising from the differing Exposition that is given of the word Creature. Some by creature do understand the frame of the visible World, consisting of the Celestial, and Elementary Regions; the Heavens with the goodly Furniture of Stars, and the Earth with its ornament, and the other Elements. And so they say that the creatures do by a fixed Instinct desire that original perfection wherein they were created, which shall be restored to them at the Time of the manifestation of the Sons of God; that is, at the day of Judgment: it follows, v. 20. For the creature was made subject to vanity not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope. The Earth is under a curse, Gen. 1:17, and the Heavens by their influence do infect the Air; the creatures are subject
to be abashed and driven of man and made subject to the lust of
angrily men: it is not to have, as it could have done, to the good
of men and the glory of God; v. 24. Because the creature shall be
delivered from the bondage of corruption, into the glorious liberty of
the children of God. That is, that the creature shall be delivered from
this sorrowful estate, and be brought into a better condition: some
of all sorts shall be preferred after the day of Judgment, to be Mon-
daments of the Power & Wisdom & Goodness of God. It follows,
v. 25. For we know that the whole creature groans and travails in
the pangs of birth untill now. The Creature doth, as it were, long to be
delivered from that Vanity and Bondage. They do wish, even long
for the time, when some of every sort shall be delivered.

There be some things that may be objected against this: One is,
that the frame of Nature will be destroyed at the day of Judgment:
They shall perish, but they shall endure; ye, all of them shall men all like a
grass, as a vessel that is changed them, and they shall be changed.
This also is against in, that these Heavens, and the Earth seem to be
the place where chiefly men shall be punished; 2 Pet. 3:7. The Hea-
vens and the Earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store,
reserved unto the day of judgment, and perdition of ungodly men.

But there is another Exposition of this Scripture: The foundation
of it is, that by creature is meant the Gentiles, it may be the Ger-
nties, Mark 13:15. So we read of every human Creature: so in the
Greek, the meaning is, every Heathen Magistrate: They did not
desire Christ explicitly, but they desired the Felicity which is to
be had only in Christ: therefore Christ is called the desire of all Na-
tures. The Period was now coming, when the Gospel was to be
Preached to the Gentiles; now the time should be of manifesting the
Sons of God. This was done among the Jews, who all pretended to
that title, by the Apostles Preaching to them. It follows, Ew the
creature was made subject, we may, not willingly, but by reason of
their unbelief and sin. The Gentiles had been enslaved by Satan
into a miserable estate of Ignorance and Idolatry, and vile Covetous,
so that it seemed impossible they should ever be happy. That it
may be understood of God that delivered them, and left them to them-
selves; they were in a state of bondage to their lusts. This comes
in a Parenthesis; it follows, in hope, because the Creature is self
in
DOCTRINE.

WHEN the Jews rejected the Gospel, God first is in the Gentiles, and they received him.

Tho' there were some among the Jews that waited for redemption in Jerusalem, yet the body of the Jews rejected him. This was foretold in the Old Testament, Ps. 52. 1, 2. Who had believed and were not? And those words are applied to Israel by Paul, Phil. 65. 2. compare Rom. 10. 1. To Israel he spake, and they perished. And before by Moses, Deut. 32. and 32. When Christ was here on earth, he foretold that the Jews would reject him; Luke 18. 19. The all with one consent began to make excuse, Matt. 22. 31. They made light of it, and they increased the means of the same, and so on. And presently upon it, God sent it to the Gentiles, and they received it; the Gentiles were under great prejudices by reason of their Education; they had been nursed up in darkness, and addicted to all sorts of Wickedness; yet they gave great Entertainment to the Gospel, it was foretold that they would do so. God has promised the heathen unto Christ, Phil. 12. 8. I will give the heathen for thine inheritance. And Paul reckons many promises together, Rom. 15. 12. Rejoice, ye Gentiles, and be glad. Ver. 11. Praise ye Lord, all ye Gentiles. 13. There shall be a rest of Israel, and he shall reign over the Gentiles, in him shall the Gentiles trust.
These promises were abundantly fulfilled, as we have an account in the acts of the Apostles and Epistles written to several Churches of the Gentiles. This was represented, Rev. 5. 2. It fell out as it was foretold: Phil. 1. 21. 2. God sent forth the rod of his strength out of Zion, and made multitudes of kings in the day of his power.

1. Refl. Because it was the word of old, God out of singular love to Abraham comforted him, and all the nations of the earth should be blessed in his seed, God delighted in his obedience, and promises that as a reward of it, Gen. 22. 18. Abraham offered his son to God, and God rewarded him, giving a Son that should be the Saviour of mankind. So God promised it to Christ, as the reward of his Service; the Service that God called him to, was very great, it was a mighty undertaking to lay down his life for Sinners; for the Beloved Son of God to bear the wrath of God! And God promised a large Kingdom as the reward of that Service. Isa. 11. 12. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong: because he poureth out his soul unto death. Isa. 49. 6. It is a light thing with me that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the ends of the earth. And long before, He made a promise by Noah, Gen. 9. 27. God shall enlarge his sepulcher, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem; he shall be incorporated with the Church. There were promises also to the Patterity of Ham. Isa. 59. 21. In that day shall Israel be a third with Egypt, and with Assyria, &c. God remembered these promises, and shewed himself faithful to perform them.

2. It was much for the Honour of Christ. God has made him a King as well as a Prophet and a Priest, and will give a great Kingdom to him. The Honour of a King is in the multitude of his Subjects, and for his Honour he shall be King of Nations. He suffered a great deal of Reproach upon Earth, and God will make his Name great from the rising to the setting Sun. Phil. 2. 17. Men shall be blessed in him; all nations shall call him blessed. Dan. 2. 44, 45. In the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed, &c. That is greatly for the Honour of Christ, that all Nations shall be their Redemption to him. Rev. 5. 9. Thou hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of all nations. And ver. 12. Worship thou him, all ye of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation, and kingdom, and them which are fallen; and them which are alive, and them which are alive forevermore.
2. It was very much that One Nation should not impress the Mercy of God. God's Mercy is his Own, and He has the liberty to bestow it where he pleases; but there seems to be a condescension in it that He should offer this Grace to all Nations. If Grace had been offered only to the Jews, they would have swelled with Pride; and the poor Gentiles would have been discouraged. God is the Father of all Nations, and it seems most suitable that his Mercy should expiate it self, that he should show the extensiveness of it: that the Praises of God may return from all Lands. Rom. 3. 29. Is be the God of the Jews only, is be not also of the Gentiles? yea, of the Gentiles also.

USE. I. Of Warning. That you don't reject the Gospel. The Jews rejected it, and God gave it to other People that brought forth the fruit of it. Now we have the Opportunity, God offers the Gospel to our Nation and unto this Generation; this will be a Foundation of eternal Life; if we don't reject it. Let it be your care to receive it. Some People have not the offer of it. Do not as the Jews did!

There were two things that made them reject it,

1. A Spirit of Slumber. They enjoyed a great deal of ease and outward Prosperity, and fell into a slumbering condition, Rom. 11. 8. they wanted to be awakened to work out their Salvation with fear and trembling: they set their hearts upon the World, Mat. 22. 5. One had bought a piece of ground, and another had bought five yoke of Oxen; and they must be excused, Luk. 14. 18, 19. A worldly spirit will ruin many men; the reverse to this is true of many, 2 Cor. 4. 18. The love of the world befits many; they like to get but little of the world, yet they lose their Souls for the sake of it: The foe of the Gospel is choked with the care of the world, Mat. 13. 22. Worldly affections eat out their Religion. They say, It is good to be here; they don't seek that City that is to come.

2. They were Blinded. Rom. 11. 7. Besides their natural blindness, they had a veil upon their hearts, that was the Law; they thought that would save them, Rom. 10. 3. They went about to establish their own righteousness; they drank in a conceit that that would do. They thought they did not need the Blood of a Redeemer; they thought the Blood of Sacrifices would serve the turn: so many among us are blinded with a proud conceit of their own excellency; their eyes are fixed upon that, they don't see their need of Christ; they don't see the glory of Christ. An hundred Arguments won't convince them.
Say what you will to them, they think they must have something to commend them: they are strangers to the freeness of God’s Grace, and they are wasting of themselves to make themselves clean, and they are adorning of them to make themselves fine & beautiful; You can’t beat them out of conceit of themselves. They think they are something when they are nothing, Gal. 6.3. They prize their Qualifications, and that is an hindrance, to their giving of Christ.

USE, II. Of Examination. Whether GOD is not Angry with the Country for not preaching the Gospel to the Heathen? That GOD is angry with the Country, and has been these three score years, has been evident by His sending Epidemsical Diseases and Drearmers; And it greatly becomes us to enquire into the Causes of God’s Anger: many things here are satisfied in are the cause of anger: if God is not angry for this; yet there is cause enough of Anger. But we have Special Reason to enquire whether he is not angry for this; because it is taken notice of in England, and we are reflected on in Print, that we have little care of the Heathen; it was taken notice of above Forty Years ago. Another occasion for enquiry is, That God has made them a terrible strange to us in Deputy War and Sence that by their joining with the French; and in this present War: These Wars have been very expensive, and bloody, and have made many Towns desolate, and many times the affliction carries the token of the five, by the punishment, sometimes Men may learn the sin. They are instruments to punish us, it may be we have not done our duty to them.

1. CHRIST commands us to preach the Gospel to them. The Country is not left at liberty, whether they will cause the Gospel to be preached unto them; it is not a matter of indifference, whether they will do it, or neglect it. I readily acknowledge that the Indians have showed a very brutish and heathen spirit, that where a people lived among them that made a great profession of Religion, they did not enquire into it, whether the Doctrine that they professed was or e, or not. They plainly manifested that they had very much or literated the light of Nature; and made no tolerable use of their natural Conscience, that taught them that there was a glorious GOD, that made the World, that was to be worshipped and served; and that their Souls were immortal. But that is no excuse or us; the command of Christ to his Disciples was, To preach the Gospel to every creature,
Censure, Mark 16. 15. And to Go and teach all Nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, Mat. 28. 19.

This Command was not given to the Apostles alone, but to their Successors also throughout all generations; for it follows, v. 20. 

La. I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Hence it is evident, that it is the Mind of Christ, that Christian People as they have Opportunity, do in all Generations, Labour to Christianize the Heathen.

It is Expected from those that are in Authority, who have Power to send Preachers, and to Maintain and Subsist them in doing their Work; to take Effectual Care that the Gospel be Published. In the Time of the Jewish Church, this was not so required; for the Ordinances of God at that time were suited only for One National Church.

The Ceremonial Law was as a partition wall between the Jews and Gentiles. The Church-state was suited to One Nation; and yet the Jews did take a great deal of care to Propagate the Heathen, and to bring them to the knowledge of the True God. And there were many Proselytes among them, as Cornelius. And the Jews that after the Captivity were Dispersed among the Gentiles, did bring many of them to the Profession of the True God, as we find in the Acts of the Apostles. And when the Macedonian Princes had Subscribed the Epistles, they Compelled them to be Circumcised, and to make a Profession of the true God. But now we are under an Express Command to Teach all Nations.

2. We ought to do so out of Respect to the Honour of JESUS CHRIST. We make a Profession of Honouring him, we know that He is Worthy of Honour, Rev. 5. 12. Honour is the Lamb's throne; for, it is the Source, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. It would have been well worth the while, for us to have honoured Christ in this way. A Spirit of Love to Christ, would have put us upon it to have advanced his Honour in this way. People are wont to be concerned for the Honour of their Princes. An Ancient Grecian was wonderfully affected when he saw Alexander sit on the throne of Cyrus. This is one of the Honours Promised unto JESUS CHRIST, That all nations shall serve him, and BLESS, Psal. 72. 11. And that the nations in ends of the earth should be gathered unto him, and PSALM, Psal. 2. 8. T KING upon every knee shall bow, Phil. 2. 10. And it would greatly have become us to have laid out our selves for the Advancement of these Promises. We owe more than this to Jesus Christ. And it would have been a great Consolation, to see these...
Indians, who had Worshipp’d the Devil, meeting together to Praise and Glorify Christ, and to bear them Discouraging of the Wonder-
ful Love of God, in sending his Son to Die for us. David rejoiced in
that Men should abundantly utter the memory of his great goodness; and
of his Righteousness, Psal. 145. 7. And if a Spirit of Love to
Jesus Christ had flourished in us, it would be the Joy of our Hearts,
to see Congregations of Indians waiting on God in his House, Joynng
in Prayer, and hearing the Gospel, and Celebrating the Memory of the
Death of Christ.

3. We ought to have done it out of Love to Mankind. Christ Jesus Died
for the Salvation of Sinners, and it is a great thing to Save a Soul from
Death, Jam. 5. 20. It is matter of Humbling to think of the Damnation
of Men, and to see Men go Ignorantly on in a way of Destruction.
Our Hearts should yearn towards these Poor Heathen; it becomes us to
Commiserate their Condition. It is a doleful thing to think, that
from generation to generation, they go down to Hell. We know that
none is able to bear it, to dwell with devouring Fire, To dwell with ever-
 lasting Burnings. And we should not think much of it, to be at some
Expense for to Redeem Men from Destruction. It is very great kindness
to help Men to Heaven. It will be as intolerable for these Heathen
to bear the Torments of Hell, as for any of us to bear them. And as
we dread to go to Hell our selves, it should be awful to us to consider
their Damnation. Love and Pity calls for it, that we should help
them out of their Danger. We should pity Beasts in Misery, much
more Men: Though they be Brute Persons; yet, they are of Mankind,
and so objects of Compassion. It is an act of Love to our own nature
to seek their Salvation: If we can further that, we shall do them
great Service.

4. The Profession of those that Adventured into this Country was, that it
was their principal design, to bring the Indians to the knowledge of the true
God and Saviour of Mankind, and the Christian Faith; as the King declares
in the Charter: The like is expressed in the Charter for Connecticut.
And it would have been the Honour of the Country, if they had
answered that Profession. Indeed we gave the Heathen an Example;
and if they had not been miserably belotted, they would have taken
more notice of it. But we have done very little to Answer our Pro-
 nation. Some few pious persons, of their own accord, have taken
some pains, and had some Success. And some Money that has been
contributed
contributed in England for the furtherance of that Design, has been faithfully expended that way: But the Country has been at very little Cost for the Conversion of the Heathen. Many Men have been more careful to make a booty of them, than to gain them to the practice of Religion. It puts me to a stand to conjecture what Excuse can be made for this Neglect. The Poverty of the Country will be no Apology for this Omission. We have great cause to be humbled, that we have answered our profession so poorly.

5. We our selves have been pitied, when we were in the like condition. The English Nation was formerly under heathenish darkness, as these Indies; they worshipped several Gods, Taisto, Iden, Ther and Freo. But there were those that pitied them, and brought the Gospel among them; and tho' it was mixed with some Errors; and it was about Two hundred Years before they were all brought to a steady Profession of Christianity, and soon after they declined to Popery; yet the issue has been such, through the ever ruling Hand of God, that we have cause to count it the greatest Mercy, that ever the Land did enjoy. Hereby God has laid a foundation for the Salvation of many Thousands of Souls; and God has raised up many Men that have been the glory of the Nation, and many that have suffered Martyrdom for the Faith of the Gospel. And what ever Declensions there be at the present; yet the Gospel is professed, and there is great Opportunity to come to Eternal Life. We should have been so sensible of this Mercy of God to us, as to pity these Indies, not knowing but that God may have glorious Churches among them; and that in length of time, many of their Posterity may be glorious Witnesses unto Christ, and that His Kingdom may flourish among them.

6. The Examples of Others may make us Ashamed. Besides what has been done by the English formerly in sending Preachers into Germany, there is at this day a great deal done in the East Indies, by the Germans and Danes for the Propagation of the Gospel. Worthy Men are sent over; many are brought to the Profession of the Faith; the

* Acts six and seven parts in Britain, because we have in the name of Christ, and are more

Our Forefathers in this Nation were given up unto us blessed a Service of the Devil, as any Nation under the Sun. It is therefore an Effort of infinite Mercy, that the Day both dawned on us poor Gentiles. Eph. 3: 5 — 10.

Owns Medici, on the Glory of CHRIST. p. 27.
Bible is printed in their own Language; great Contributions are sent over to advance that Work, and the Name of Christ is renowned among them; and the People that have been in Darkness have seen great Light. And it is matter of Sorrow, that when others are carrying the Gospel many thousands of Miles, from their own Country, We suffer them that dwell among us, and that are Borrowers of us, to lie in Darkness, and afford them very little Help for their Deliverance.

7. The Authority of Papists, for the Spreading of their Religion, may greatly shame us. The Spaniards, have done a great deal to bring the Indians in Peru and Mexico to their Religion; and the Portuguese, to bring the Indians in Brazil, and the Indies, to theirs. And the French, are diligent in Canada, and elsewhere, to gospellize them. And do we sit still, without any hearty Endeavours for the Salvation of the Heathen among us? It may be said, they do them little service to bring them from one error to another; to take them out of the Pit, and lead them into a Share. But however, they therein make Conscience to advance their own Religion; run great Ventures, and endure many Hardships, in order to it. And is it not a Shame to us to be backward to promote the True Religion? If true Zeal, and Praise, and vain Glory, have a mighty influence upon them; it might be expected that Love to God, and the Souls of Men, should stir us up to Propagate the Truth. We have abundantly more Reason to lay out our selves for the Truth; than others have, for their Errors and Superstitious Doctrines.

8. If they Should embrace Religion, it would be a means to make them live more comfortably in this World. It is observable, that many Nations, when they were in their Heathenism, lived miserably as to this World. So the English, and the French, and others; But since their imbracing the Gospel, they are got into a flourishing condition. God leads them in ways of Wisdom, to follow Husbandry, Trades and Merchandize, and to live honourably and plentifully. They have good Houses, handsome Clothing, and comfortable Diet, they live more like Men than they did in former Ages. It is said Christ is worthy of Riches, Rev. 5. 12. God bestows them on Christ two ways, one is in giving Riches for the maintaining the Ordinances of Christ; the other is, in giving Riches to the Professors of the Christian Religion. And it is very hopeful, if the Indians did once imbrace the true Religion,
Religion, they would by degrees, leave off their wild and base way of living; learn Trades, improve Land; and govern themselves as civilized Nations do; they would relinquish this Savage way of living that they have been addicted unto.

9: If they should embrace Religion, is might provoke us to Emulation: We make an high Profession; but yet Religion runs low, and Iniquity doth abound. There is a great deal of Pride, Drunkenness, Injustice, Prophaness, and Knavery in the Land. And we need to say as David, Will they not revive us again? Ps. 85. 6. It is the conjecture of one learned Writer, that the Christians in America will Indianize and become that Gog and Magog spoken of, Rev. 20. I hope that will prove a Mistake. But if the Indians were prevailed with to receive the Gospel, it is hopeful, their Zeal may provoke us. If we observe a Spirit of Faith, and Love, and Holiness-Mindedness in them; it may make us ashamed, and provoke us to Emulation. Paul hoped that the Conversion of the Gentiles would provoke the Jews to Emulation, Rom. 11. 14. Its hopeful, if Religion should prevail among them, it may be a Means to Revive it among us.

USE III. For see what is a very desirable thing, that the Heathen be brought to the Faith. There be many Promises of the Conversion of the Gentiles, Isa. 42. 6. And it has been Graciously Accomplished many times when Nations are brought to Receive the Gospel, so they do it with Sincerity: and so they will be Blessed for ever, Acts 26. 18. Private Persons may help it forward, by their Prayers, as well as others: We should Pray for the Conversion of the Indians.

1. That will be for better, than only to make Peace. If they continue in their Heathenism, there will be occasion of contention: There was abundance of Trouble between Israel and the Heathen that were about them; if they continue Heathens they will be apt to fall in with the Papists; if they continue Heathens, they will carry it Provokingly; if they be contentious, they will be ready to run to Arms, and avenge themselves by making War: But if they be brought to Religion, then there will be Hopes of a Durable Peace: The People of Edron fell out often with Israel; but when they were Converted, they were Serviceable and Helpful to them; Zech. 9. 7. Edron shall be as a Jebusite.

2. That
2. That will be much better, than to Destroy them. Some men in their Rage, meditate nothing but utter Destruction; They throw Fire-bands, Arrows and Death. They are like Edom, and the Philistines; that said, Let us cast them off from being a Nation, that the Name of Israel may be no more in Remembrance, Psal. 83. 4. These men have a Bloody Spirit: 'Tis much better to convert them: Then they will do good, they will serve and glorify God, they will help to enlarge his Kingdom, and be a benefit to their Neighbours.

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