

London Society.

two clergymen and some Presbyterian and Independent ministers—not Baptists or Wesleyans—founded (1795) the London Missionary Society on inter-denominational lines; and this new society began its great and world-wide work by sending out (1796) a large party, chiefly artisans and their families, to the South Sea Islands, with the assistance of Samuel Marsden, chaplain to the convicts at “Botany Bay”—which circumstance is the first link between that convict cargo of 1786 and the missionary enterprise. The same year, 1796, saw the formation of two small missionary associations in Presbyterian Scotland, despite the opposition of the General Assembly.

Simeon's paper at Eclectic meeting.

The interest aroused by these movements brought the subject again before the Eclectic Society. On February 8th, 1796, Charles Simeon himself opened a discussion on the question, “With what propriety, and in what mode, can a Mission be attempted to the Heathen from the Established Church?” The form of the question marks a step in advance. It is no longer Botany Bay, or the East Indies, or Africa. It is “the Heathen” that are thought of. The Evangelization of the World is contemplated, however remotely. And the mention of “the Established Church” indicates, what was the fact, that while the brethren gave hearty God-speed to the non-denominational London Missionary Society—some of them contributing to it—they felt nevertheless that the Church of England must have its own Missions.

John Venn's paper.

Yet three years elapsed before any action was taken. Several of the brethren were very doubtful and hesitating. Simeon, Scott, and Basil Woodd alone were eager to go forward. The subject was much talked about at Clapham; and Wilberforce's journal records two dinners at Henry Thornton's, where it was definitely discussed. On November 9th, 1797, he writes, “Simeon, Charles Grant, Venn, there. Something, but not much, done. *Simeon in earnest.*” At length, we come to the year 1799. On March 18th, in that year, one hundred years ago, John Venn himself once more brought the question before the Eclectic Society, in a new form—“What methods can we use more effectually to promote the knowledge of the Gospel among the Heathen?” This was a distinct further advance upon the thesis of 1796. The question now was not, “What ought the Church to do?” but “What can we do?”

Full notes of the discussion are extant, and are of deep

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