

**AMERICAN EMIGRATION: A  
DISCOURSE IN BEHALF OF THE  
AMERICAN HOME MISSIONARY  
SOCIETY, MAY, 1857**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649261314

American Emigration: A Discourse in Behalf of the American Home Missionary Society, May, 1857 by J. M. Sturtevant

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AMERICAN EMIGRATION.

A

DISCOURSE

IN BEHALF OF THE

AMERICAN  
HOME MISSIONARY SOCIETY,

PREACHED IN THE CITIES OF NEW YORK AND  
BROOKLYN, MAY, 1857.

BY

REV. J. M. STURTEVANT, D. D.,  
PRESIDENT OF ILLINOIS COLLEGE.

NEW YORK:

PUBLISHED BY THE AMERICAN HOME MISSIONARY SOCIETY,  
BIBLE HOUSE, ASTOR PLACE.

1857.

JOHN A. GRAY, PRINTER,

NO. 375 BROADWAY.

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## DISCOURSE.

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Matt. 10 : 5, 6. "These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying : Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not : but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."

IF I mistake not, the superficial reader of the Bible often greatly misapprehends these words ; perhaps some have even felt themselves shocked at the sentiment supposed to be expressed in them. If we will not have the candor or take the trouble, to infer their true spirit from the general tenor of our Lord's life and teachings, and especially from the relations of his then present labors to the establishing of the kingdom of heaven among men, these words will seem to have been uttered in that spirit of Jewish exclusiveness, which would forever confine the knowledge and the blessings of the true religion to the Jewish people, and deprive all the rest of the world of any participation in them. Nothing, however, could be farther from the true spirit of the text.

Many persons seem to consider the Jewish dispensation as a perfect failure. Their conception of the subject is, that God raised up the Jewish nation to be his peculiar people, disciplined it by a series of miraculous interpositions through a period of fifteen hundred years, and then broke it in pieces and cast it off, because nothing could be done with it ; that it did indeed receive in trust those lively oracles of God, the Old Testament



Scriptures, and hand them over to the Christian Church, and that a Jewish mother did indeed give birth to the Messiah; but that from this point the influence and usefulness of the Jewish dispensation ceased.

This is certainly a very shallow and inadequate view of the subject. It was the object of that ancient economy to raise up and qualify one people to receive the promised Messiah, to appreciate that fullness of divine revelation which he should make, and to become his missionaries to publish his glad tidings to the nations, and found the Christian Church in many lands.

And with this design of the Jewish Church the result corresponded. True, the Jewish state rejected the Son of God, and instigated his crucifixion, and thus doomed itself to speedy and terrible destruction. But there were thousands of humble and devout persons among the Jews, who were prepared to receive the promised Saviour, and to appreciate his spiritual doctrines and his divine mission; while the most refined philosophy of Greece mocked and said, What will this babblers say? Jewish men did first receive the Gospel; Jewish men became its first preachers and missionaries; Jerusalem became the very centre and citadel of the christian mission; and from Jerusalem Jewish men carried the Gospel to the Euphrates and to the Pillars of Hercules, to the banks of the Nile, and the Rhine, and the Danube. Jewish men did, in a single generation, fill the vast Roman Empire with christian teaching and christian churches.

Hence, in establishing his kingdom on earth, our Lord's first work was with the Jewish mind. The ripe harvest of fifteen hundred years was to be gathered in. The men who, as the product of the long history of God's chosen people, were trained for the solemn crisis, now at hand, were to be, by the voice of the Master and

his chosen band, called out from among the Jewish people, and prepared to go abroad on their mission to mankind. The chosen people of God were to be summoned to come up to the help of the Lord against the mighty. The Pentecost was to be ushered in; the church of Jerusalem was to be founded, from which the beams of salvation would shine on the remotest nations of the known world, before the men then living were in their graves. And time pressed—the hour of destiny was near. In a few months the great expiatory sacrifice would have been offered, the veil of the temple have been rent, and the time for proclaiming the kingdom of heaven to all nations have come. To the Jews then—to the JEW, was the first message. Well might the Lord say, “Go not into the way of the Gentiles;” they are not prepared for this crisis of the ages; “into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not,” their time is not yet. “Go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel,” and summon them to their glorious national destiny, as the missionaries of these glad tidings to every people, and kindred, and nation. This is, I am persuaded, the true spirit of our text. There is no national narrowness, no Jewish exclusiveness here.

There are several analogies between the age in which the Christian religion was first propagated in the world and that in which we live, which are full of interest both to the philosopher and the Christian, and which must be regarded as invested with very great practical significancy. In that age a general expectation had been awakened by the prophecies of the Old Testament, that the Messiah was about to appear, and establish the kingdom of God among men. The meaning of the prophecies foretelling those great events, was then but ill understood; but we know that they implied that the blessings of the revealed religion were to overleap those

national boundaries, which had hitherto confined them, and to be freely imparted to the Gentile world. In our age, the prophecies of that same ancient Book of God have awakened a like expectation, that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is to overleap the boundaries which have long confined it, and to be given to all nations. In that age, there was a providential preparation for the planting and wide dissemination of the Gospel in the world, such as had never existed before, and did not exist again for more than fifteen hundred years. In our age, there is an equally providential preparation, the work of many ages, for the fulfillment of the prophecies which point to our time; the giving of this same Gospel of salvation to every nation under heaven. In that age, there was one people, a rebellious and stiff-necked people indeed, and yet trained by ages of providential discipline to be the messengers of Christ to the millions of the Roman Empire, and that people placed by their wide dispersion, —which had already been going on for ages,—in such relations to the mighty mass, as to give them peculiar and unrivaled facilities for accomplishing the work assigned them. The converts on the day of Pentecost were devout Jews, from every nation under heaven, assembled at Jerusalem to worship. In that assembly, was the nucleus of a christian church in almost every city of the Roman Empire. Wherever the Apostles went, they found Jews and a Jewish synagogue, and in that synagogue they preached their first sermon, and made their first converts. Dispersed Jews formed the line of electric conduction, along which the Gospel flashed from Jerusalem to the extremities of the empire. This is Providence—this is God's work.

But in this particular, our analogy does not fail us. In our age, there is a people no less distinctly marked than the Jew in the age of Augustus—prepared by a