

THE VOICE OF GOD TO THE CHURCHES



Presented to

A

of Friends

SERMON

ON THE

Death

OF THE

REVEREND

GEORGE CRAN, AUGUSTUS DESGRANGES,
AND JONATHAN BRAIN,

MISSIONARIES IN INDIA

FROM

THE LONDON MISSIONARY SOCIETY.

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BY DAVID BOGUE.

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SERMON.

HOSEA, xiv, 9,

WHO IS WISE, AND HE SHALL UNDERSTAND THESE THINGS? PRUDENT, AND HE SHALL KNOW THEM? FOR THE WAYS OF THE LORD ARE RIGHT, AND THE JUST SHALL WALK IN THEM; BUT THE TRANSGRESSORS SHALL FALL THEREIN.

GOD is continually imparting to men instruction calculated to make them wise unto salvation. The volume of sacred Scripture, and the dispensations of Providence have both this end in view. Each throws additional light on the other, and each enforces the counsel which the other gives. Ordinary events too often pass away without exciting suitable reflections, or producing their proper effects in many who profess to be the disciples of Christ. But remarkable dispensations sometimes occur, which rouse the attention of the most careless, and compel them to cry out, "This is the finger of God; what meaneth he by this astonishing act?" To you, my brethren, whose souls long for the conversion of the heathen, and who are exerting yourselves for this most important and glorious of ends, God is now presenting such a dispensation. We naturally wish for success in this great work, and our expectations are sanguine: "It is the cause of God; his heart is set upon it, and it will assuredly succeed." So far we argue well; but too many are apt to add, "God will make it prosper; he will crown it with the smiles of his providence; he will repress the wrath of its enemies; he will preserve the lives of his missionaries wherever they go, for to his power all climates are alike." But instead of these charming scenes, which fill the spectator with delight, and which exist only in imagination, the real-landscape is of a very different form and color. Some missionaries prove unfaithful or unsteady, and unfit for their office, and others are driven away from the country which was the field of labor: but what is still more affecting, one missionary, after arriving from the uttermost end

of the earth at the place of his intended exertions, is snatched away by death; a second, after the attainment of the language of the country, so as to be able to preach the Gospel; and a third, after being qualified to translate the scriptures into the native tongue. Thus Jehovah acts, while to us there appears an absolute necessity for their continuance in life and for their labors.

Such an event has occurred to us, and we have been called bitterly to lament the decease of three of our missionaries in the eastern parts of the world; of Jonathan Brain after the short abode of four months in the country destined for his future labors; of George Cran by more than three years study qualified to preach the Gospel to the heathen; and of Augustus Desgranges, who was enabled by five years of vigorous application to translate the Scriptures into their language.

The first whom God removed by death was George Cran, the son of a farmer in the parish of Forgue, in Aberdeenshire. When he was brought to the knowledge of the truth, he became a member of the church at Huntley, under the pastoral care of George Cowie, a man of eminent piety, talents, zeal, and usefulness. Our young friend's labors began with the teaching of a Sunday school in a neighboring village. Thirsting for more important service, he offered himself to the Missionary Society, and being accepted, was sent down to the seminary at Gosport, in 1801, where he continued between two and three years in the diligent pursuit of his studies. Entire devotedness to the Redeemer, humility, meekness, prudence, and ardent love for souls shone forth conspicuously in him, and formed his character and deportment. His heart was among the heathen, and his highest wish to preach Christ to them. No student ever left the seminary who had excited warmer affections in the disciples of Christ, and a more tender concern for his prosperity and success.

In a visit which he paid to his friends in the north, just before his departure for India, he warmly pleaded the cause of the heathen world in every sermon. His eminent spirituality and fervent zeal made a deep impression on the minds of the people of God, who expressed their fears that so precious a life would be but of short duration. He told them himself, that he did not expect to live long, nor to see many converted; "but," said he, "if I may be but permitted to remove a little of the rubbish, and make the way plainer to others; if I may but hew out a few of the rough stones, and leave them to others to polish, I shall think myself highly honored and my life well spent."

He arrived at Madras early in 1805, and after residing there for some time he went to Vizigapatam, where he and his fellow laborer, Mr. Desgranges, founded a mission which we hope, will continue till the Gospel have free course and be glorified in that part of India; and there he spent the last years of his life. His letters from that place were frequent and full, and display a meekness of wisdom, a spirituality of mind, a zeal for missionary objects, and an anxiety to learn the language that he might preach Christ, from which might easily be seen his only business was with the souls of men.

For a considerable time he enjoyed good health, and there was a pleasing prospect that he might be spared for many years; but a bilious fever, in Nov. 1808, brought him to the gates of death. He recovered in some degree, and the general who commanded in that district invited Mr. Cran to accompany him in his journey round the province, in hopes that it might prove beneficial to him. In that journey he finished his course. The letters which he wrote to Mr. Desgranges shew the frame of his mind, and his employment during the last weeks of his life. In one of them he says, "I am sorry to say that this leaves me in a weak state. However I was able to go into the village in the evening and address the poor heathen. They rejoiced to hear; and I was constrained to pray that God would be pleased to spare my life a little longer, that I may enjoy the pleasure of proclaiming the good news. I find this does me good." In another, from a different place: "I have had much conversation with the natives, at least once or twice every day, and sometimes with considerable numbers of both sexes. In short I have spent many pleasant hours with them, and found many desirous to here more of the Gospel. Travelling among the natives and proclaiming the good news of salvation is certainly delightful work." Such were the sentiments and feelings of this good missionary of Jesus Christ, who in less than three weeks afterwards, on the sixth of January, 1809, closed a useful life of service to Jesus his master. Mr. Desgranges arrived a few hours after his decease, and conveyed his remains to the grave in the burying place at Chicacole.

Augustus Desgranges was descended from ancestors who were professors of the pure religion in France, and left their native country in order to preserve a good conscience. He was born and educated in London, and there was brought to a participation of the blessings of the Gospel. He and Mr. Cran