Christianity among Indian Tribes.

There exists to-day a remarkable theory with regard to the civilization of uncivilized peoples. This theory comprises so much of modern philosophy that it would be difficult to find a name for it which would give any adequate idea of what it embraces. We may as well call it the "gradual development theory." It prevails among certain literary and scientific men who are fond of discarding all divinity from the pages of the Bible; it is also cherished by a large class of religious teachers and writers who claim for numerous other religious leaders co-divinity with Christ.

These delight in discovering common features of belief in the sacred writings of different nations; they hold with tenacity to parts of the Scriptures, and reject others. Of course they always reject what does not fit in with their own pre-conceived opinions.
As an illustration of the philosophy which discredits the entire Holy Writ I will refer to a man who a few years ago visited the Indian tribes of Alaska. He was a so-called scientist and a voluminous writer. After his Alaska visit he published an immense volume which contained the results of his observations and discoveries. One remark I noticed was to the effect that no Alaska Indian had primarily any idea of a Supreme Being.

You follow on to see what more he will say. His theory appears to be that great lengths of time, even hundreds of thousands of years, have elapsed since man’s appearance on the earth. He asserts that his origin still lies in mystery—that is, it is still an unsolved problem. Yet from the lowest conceivable condition man has been a subject of progressive development. Little by little the ignorance, the superstition, the savagery have been dissipated by the light of knowledge; and humanity with more or less regularity has mounted from grade to
grade to higher planes of living and acting. Thus a band of savages becomes less savage till it finally emerges into the broad openings of cultured life. The Bible man does not dissent altogether from these human theories. He rejoices in the results which are claimed but plainly perceives that the rejectors and neglectors of Bible history have in their dizzy flights of theorizing evidently lost sight of the true steps of descent by which these results have been obtained and have never discovered the broad flights which have ever marked the downward tendencies, plungings and fallings of poor human beings. When the hills, as in Arizona, Nevada, or Alaska, an Indian tribe, very degraded indeed, as some are, as yet sit in the dimmest twilight of knowledge full of maddening passions and unclean habits he never sees if he looks with carefulness such a tribe growing better by its own motion. On the contrary the tendency is quite the other way — the tribe grows worse; like
every object in the world of matter, left to itself, it gravitates downward.

Under their own evil and vicious leading the Apache became worse and worse from decade to decade, and as they were steeped more and more in the pools of vice and crime, their numbers grew ever less till they became a broken, scattered and helpless set of fragments, a sort of rejected scoria of humanity. This tribe stands as a type of hundreds of others which the pages of history will recall to our minds.

Once they were great and powerful, now a plaintive wail comes to us from some lonely spot where a few sad relics of fallen greatness lament the past and hopelessly point to the future.

But is there no relief from these saddening pictures? Let us take another line of thought, the Bible method, which is indeed the true historic method.

The first man is a full man, made like his God and communicating with his Maker. Since the coming of this first man, the main stem of the race has been ever high in the
scale of intelligence and right doing. There has been a falling off on the right and on the left all the way long and a wandering far into outer darkness. And all the liftings up and restorings to the plane of a genuine civilization have been from the missionary efforts of the higher and purer peoples interjected into the lower. The leaven put into the meal has never been wholly in vain.

God, the father of us all, has never left himself at any time without witnesses. His people who have toiled long keeping as near as they could get to the right way, always have had and always will have a real more or less pronounced for the spread of His knowledge.

It is a noticeable truth in history as in that of Greece, Rome, and for a time in that of Spain and France, that a departure from God, which is in essence a departure from right doing very rapidly disintegrates and degrades a people, though that people have already attained and for some time
held a high degree of intellectual development. The backward tendencies among such peoples has been arrested and the nations saved from perpetual savagery by the salt of good men left among them? There are often multitude of quiet, unobtrusive people who have not bowed and will never bow the knee to any Baal. Now, can our Indian tribes lift themselves? There is a simplicity in the natural and eloquent speeches of an Indian chief. He seems to have much native good in him. If the bad conduct of all our bad men who deal with the Indians, both directly and indirectly, were with its mill-stone of hindrances lifted from their necks, would not these savages embrace the opportunities that we now offer them, and escape from the thraldom of their ignorance and superstition?

My answer is—No.

It will never be done, the lifting will never come about; except through the means of patient and persistent external help. As the natural man likes his natural ways so the savage-born likes the wild
ways of his people; these ways are peculiar, they are familiar to him; like the listings of his mother-tongue they have grown to be a part of himself. He is wedded to them by all the force of prejudice and by all the leopards-coloring of superstitions and beliefs. He alone, like a child attempting with a rope under his feet to raise himself, would only follow an upward impulse spasmodically to finally topple over and fall back discouraged and beaten. Depend upon it no savage unaided; no heathen people, will when left to itself ever work itself up into the light of a pure Christian civilization.

Teachers are needed and teachers must be sent. Two by two from age to age they have gone forth from Jerusalem, from Rome, from Paris, from London, from New York, and from other world-centres on both sides of the Atlantic. They have gone commissioned and consecrated to the Master's service; they have sown much seed, watched many tender plants and gathered abundant harvests.

After the harvest the seeds and the seed
sowing have been multiplied again and again and new fields have become white with new harvests. And this process so true, so evident, so historic—is a Divine process. It is Christ’s own. This Christ who was and is the All in All did not make mistakes either in his theory or in his methods. He said and His Gospel continues to say: “Go! go into all the world!” He demanded that those who had been with Him all the life of His manhood and had learned from Him rich lessons of hope, of joy and of heaven should not only go but should teach as they went; should tell the glad tidings and tell them everywhere to all peoples and tribes of the earth. How can not the savage tribes among us be lifted up by the same Divine process? In illustration of my opinion which is affirmative with emphasis I will submit a few items of my own observation.
1st. The Pimas of Arizona—
    Rev. Mr. Cook.
2nd. The Fort Simpson Indians—
    Rev. Mr. Crosby.
3rd. The Metlacatlalh—
    Mr. Duncan.
4th. The Yakamas—
    Rev. Mr. Wilbur.
5th. Nez Perce's—
    Rev. Mr. Spalding.
6th. Spokane's—
    Rev. Mr. Geello.