

The Real Joy of the Christmas Season.

BY ROBERT E. SPEER.

Is not the real joy of the Christmas season found in its spirit of unselfishness? Even the child who looks forward to it with joy for what he expects to receive, will stand in thrills of delight with clasped hands trembling with pleasure, as he watches other children or parents take up the presents which he had given, and the giving of which has filled his little soul with gladness. It is giving to others that makes the beauty of the day. It is giving to others that makes the beauty of all days. It is the glory of God's own character. He so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son. And we are most lifted up into his likeness when we display his character of generosity and free-handedness.

And ought not this spirit to go out at Christmas not to our own family and friends alone, but especially to him from whom we learned the beauty of real giving? Christmas is the only holiday of the year that bears his name. All the other joys of the day have never sufficed to destroy our remembrance of his connection with it. From the carols of the morning, to the last prayers of the evening, his Spirit is in the day. Surely we ought to make some such real definite recognition of him as we make of our interests in our other loved ones.

This year it is proposed by many different organizations to suggest to all Christians that on Christmas day a gift be made to Christ as well as to our other friends. We give and we receive among ourselves, and more bountifully still from him. It seems the most natural and the most Christian thing in the world that we should give to him.

But how may we give to him?

"Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me.

"Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and fed thee, or athirst, and gave thee drink? And when saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? and when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?

"And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of these, my brethren, even the least, ye did it unto me.

"Then shall he say unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into eternal fire which is prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me not in; naked, and ye clothed me not; sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not.

"Then shall they also answer, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? Then shall he answer them, saying,

"Verily, I say unto you, inasmuch as

ye did it not unto one of these least, ye did it not unto me. And these shall go away into eternal punishment; but the righteous into life eternal."

Many will remember these words and their lessons, and will act in the spirit of them toward those about them near at hand. May such remembrances of them be multiplied. But beside those near, there are those far. The very thought of Christmas is a reminder of the infinite distance from which the Saviour came on his errand of missionary service and missionary love. And no day could be more appropriate for some evidence of our love and appreciation of his coming, expressed in a gift to him, for the extension to distant people of the blessings which he and his truth have brought to us.

The whole unreached world is as though it were before Christ. It is with China to-day as it was with Galatia before the Saviour came. And yet it is now 1903 A. D. The Christmas season which reminds us of our obligation to Christ, reminds us also of the long delayed payment of our debts to the world, which is still as though Christ had never come.

It would seem almost just to say that the sincerity of our appreciation of Christianity and its meaning to us, might fairly be tested by our readiness on Christmas day to think of the people to whom it is unknown, and to whose need and lovelessness our love should most eagerly turn as we think of the birth of the Saviour of the whole world, whose hope was to bring peace and good will to all mankind.

This was the thought which good Father Tabb put into his Christian verse for a little child, the thought of our joyful duty to-day to desire anew and to strive to attain the deliverance of the whole world in the loving spirit of Christ:

"A little boy of heavenly birth

But far from home to-day,
Comes down to find his ball, the earth
Which sin has cast away.
O comrades, let us one and all,
Join in to get him back his ball."

The World Christianized in a Generation.

Some years ago the Rev. Dr. A. T. Pierson, well known as one of the greatest living authorities on the subject of missionary work, made this statement: "Let us suppose there were on earth to-day but one true disciple, and that, during this year, he leads to the cross one more, and then these two go forth a second year, each winning one new soul, and these four during a third year thus double their number; how long on this principle of geometrical progression would it take to gather a multitude of converts, equal to the present population of our globe? Only thirty years." The world contains some millions more than when Dr. Pierson wrote that sentence. But any one who will take the time to put pencil to paper, and make the simple calculation necessary, will find that in very little more than thirty years every one of the fifteen hundred millions of our world's population might be brought to the Saviour on that perfectly feasible and individually imperative proposition, that each converted soul shall disciple one other soul every year."

Dr. Pierson put the whole matter straight home to the conscience in the article we have quoted. After showing that in less than a single generation every living soul might be evangelized, and that after all these centuries the number of even nominal Christians is so small, he says: "What overwhelming proof is there that the bulk of professing Christians practically do no work whatever in disciplining others! They seem to think that all they are to do is to secure their own salvation. The whole question of service in saving others is forgotten."

That comes straight home, as we have said, to every conscience. It comes home to yours, who now read these lines. If every one who reads them would but win one soul for Christ this year, and those in turn won each of them another next year, and so on, in far less than a generation every man on this planet would have been saved. Reader, set the glorious work in motion so far as you are concerned. Win a soul, and set him at work for another. "He that is wise winneth souls." Have part in Christ's victory. Make it speedier by your loving service.—*Christian Guardian.*

RELIGION AND BUSINESS.

"Do not mix your religion and your business," is a piece of advice that we sometimes hear, and it is thought to be both pertinent and smart. We doubt very much its wisdom and soundness. If the religion is of the right sort, and the business is of the right sort, they ought to be mixed to a saturated solution. They were made to go together, and both of them are made worse by separation. Our Lord said to his astonished mother in the temple, when he was twelve years old: "Know ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" or (if we wish to adhere closely to the original): "Did you not know that it was necessary for me to be in the affairs of my Father?" That is a very safe position for all of us. It makes a business of our religion and a religion of our business. . . .

We will all agree that cant religious phrases, the conventional tone of the prayer-meeting talk, are out of place in the ordinary transactions of business, at the market, and in the store. But they are really out of place anywhere. Our prayer-meeting would be better if the talks and prayers were more natural and simple. Our sermons would be better if they were delivered in the language of every-day life, dignified, yet unaffected. We would not suggest that every business affair should be accompanied by audible prayer; but every earnest-hearted Christian man must find it easy and inevitable to begin and carry forward and complete his business ventures with silent prayer for divine guidance and the divine benediction. He makes his religion his business, and he cannot do otherwise than saturate and sanctify his business with his religion.—*The Watchman.*

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