

The Mission of the Church.

By Rev. E. J. Grant.

Those who have never attempted to define what they mean by the term Church as commonly used may expect me to do that, the others will not.

One would find it difficult, if not impossible, to give a definition that would be satisfactory to himself, much less may he hope to satisfy others.

And yet, it is necessary in this discussion to have an understanding of the sense in which the term is used. And so, we will let it stand for the local organizations collectively of the various bodies of Christians.

There is no such thing in the New Testament as "the Church" in the sense of one vast organization, and hence in discussing the mission of the church we must have in mind the whole body of believers as they are organized in local bodies.

The mission of the Church so understood is nothing less, and nothing other, than to herald the good tidings of Salvation to the ends of the earth; to disciple all nations, and then to teach those disciples all things that Christ has commanded.

Humanity is universally sinful; the race is in a condition of moral disorder from which it needs to be saved, and must be saved, if it is ever to reach the sublime destiny which the Creator manifestly intended.

That mankind is in a state of moral disorder is abundantly evidenced by the multifarious schemes that have been devised, and the ceaseless efforts made, with a view to overcoming the evil tendencies of man's nature, and lifting him to a higher moral plane.

And if one would see how completely the greatest and best of these schemes have failed of their purpose, one has but to glance at the present moral and spiritual condition of the peoples that gave them birth, and among whom the virtue of these great systems have been tested under most favorable conditions.

In all cases they have become national creeds, and have swayed hundreds of millions of people, who have been taught that their eternal happiness depended upon their putting in practice the principles of these creeds. Look at China for example, where for at least 25 centuries Buddhism and Confucianism have been doing the best they could for the teeming millions of that vast empire.

But except the few who have come under the influence of the Christian Gospel, the people have made little or no advance toward morality or righteousness. They are as dark in regard to saving truth as they were before Buddha was born.

What is true of China in this respect, is no less true of India where for ages before Christ came Brahmanism had been exerting what power it had to bring the people of that land to a more enlightened condition, but with what dismal failure, the moral condition of the masses there today proclaims with appalling emphasis.

If you then turn to the European countries where for twelve or thirteen centuries Mohammedanism has had its hundreds of thousands of fanatical adherents you have the same sad story of darkness covering the land and gross darkness the people.

Not only have these great systems of moral philosophy been powerless to propagate themselves beyond their respective national boundaries, but they have utterly failed to better the moral condition of the people within those boundaries.

Culture also, has had a fair chance, and has tried its hand at saving men from moral degeneracy.

It is said by those who ought to know, that the highest intellectual attainments of modern times, fall far below the attainments of ancient Egypt, Greece and Rome, but it did not and could not save those peoples from decay and final extinction, and we need not expect that intellectual enlightenment and mental culture alone will be more potent in the future than in the past.

All human schemes and devices therefore have failed to bring the deliverance of which the world stands so deeply in need, and hence if deliverance is ever to come to a lost world, it must come from other than a human source.

Now this clears the way for a brief discussion of the question "What is the Mission of the Church?" If the Church has a mission at all it is incomparably the most important, and imperative mission ever committed to man. It is nothing less than to proclaim salvation through Christ to every human being in the world.

The Divine Founder and Head of the Church with great boldness and sublime assurance, declared this to be the object and purpose of His coming, to draw all men unto Himself by giving Himself a ransom for all, and so making possible the forgiveness of sin, and the bringing of the fact and knowledge of that forgiveness into the conscious experience of man. Thus furnishing the means of man's moral regeneration and spiritual quickening, and so placing before him motives sufficiently powerful to overcome the base and evil tendency of his nature.

This is clearly the point at which all humanly devised systems of morality and religion have failed.

Some of them were not wanting in depth of thought, in high ideals, or in sublime moral maxims. But they all failed to furnish man with the power to

overcome his inherent moral weakness, much less do they pretend to bring to him regeneration or spiritual quickening.

This is precisely what the Christian religion claims to do, and in this its claim is absolutely unique.

It reveals man to himself, and so, disposes him to flee from that self; it reveals God as a Being of infinite power, and love yearning over man with unutterable desire, for his happiness and well being, and so moving the heart of man to grateful response, or in other words loving him into love.

As an illustration of this unique power of the Gospel of love over the most impregnable of human hearts, might be instanced the experience of the mighty Saul of Tarsus, whom its first touch maddened to frenzy, and then moved to deepest contrition, and finally filled with ever deepening gratitude and ever broadening sympathy it thrust him forth into service, furnished with arguments that were unanswerable, a purpose that was indomitable, a zeal that was irresistible, and a devotion which all the powers of darkness could not quench.

Such is the claim and such the method of the Christian Gospel; touching men not en masse from without but individually from within, and thus opening as the apostle expresses it, the eyes of the heart; arousing to life the slumbering sensibilities of the moral nature, and placing before the soul thus aroused, the strongest possible incentives to holy living and to earnest endeavor.

There is one force that has succeeded where all others have failed, that one force is the Gospel of the grace of God, and to propagate, or proclaim this to the ends of the earth is the mission, the sole business of the Church of God.

"Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature," is a command the meaning of which the Church has been slow in apprehending, and slower still in obeying, but a command nevertheless that will not be abrogated in one jot or tittle until the mighty task shall have been accomplished.

We say that the Church has been slow in grasping the full significance of these words, but it has never altogether ignored them, and its efforts have always been attended with such results, as can be accounted for only on the ground that the supernatural power which the Gospel claims for itself, has waited upon the steps of every herald of the blessed message, and notwithstanding the opinion of many good and learned men to the contrary, we believe that the church is to fight it out to the end on this line, and that its great and sublime mission of teaching the Gospel to every creature will be successfully accomplished during the present dispensation.

This belief is based on two considerations, either of which would be a sufficient guarantee for the ultimate triumph of this greatest of all enterprises.

1st. The progress already made. Since the day that the twelve were called unto this hour, the progress has continued without interruption, or rather in spite of perpetual interruptions, the most formidable of the powers of darkness, and ingenuity of wicked men could devise.

But the advance has never ceased, not even during that period known in history as "The Dark Ages."

There were more believers in Jesus Christ at the end of that period than at the beginning of it. But time does not permit me to trace the advance of the kingdom from its earliest days. The marvellous triumphs of the Gospel during the past hundred years, are more or less familiar to all, and need not be dwelt upon here, further than to say that Christ has won more followers during the lifetime of some now living, than during all the centuries of the Christian era up to that time.

There is not today a nation on earth, whose boundaries the Gospel has not crossed in the last hundred years, nor a people that has not come more or less under its influence.

Wherever the message has been carried the results have been even more gratifying than could have been anticipated by the most hopeful of those interested.

The church has now just fairly entered upon its great mission, and is at this hour accumulating means, and marshaling forces as never before. And now let me ask, if during the past century, with so few going forth to the work; such a small percentage of the membership interested, and such limited means at command, the church has been able to accomplish so much, what, with the entire membership fully assured, consecrated, richly endowed with the Holy Spirit, and with ever increasing millions of money at command; I say, that with these changed conditions, what may not be expected in the direction of triumph and of world wide conquest during the century upon which we have so recently entered.

No man can look thoughtfully over the past century of sore trial and sublime achievement and not be filled with brightest hopes for the future.

But, however bright our hopes; however large our expectations; however penetrating or far-reaching our vision, at the present, they will all be infinitely surpassed by the actual facts of history as centuries shall advance from strength to strength and from conquest to conquest.

2nd. But we have a more sure word of prophecy than even the triumphs of the past afford, and that is the promises of the Book.

Whatever may have been the thought in the minds

of the Old Testament seers, it is clear in the light of all the facts before us today, that their visions reached to the end of the Christian era.

Isaiah saw all nations flocking to the standard of Messiah. Zachariah saw Him speaking peace to the heathen nations, and His dominion extending from sea to sea, and from the river even unto the ends of the earth.

David saw the kings of Tarsish and of the Isles bring presents to Him, the kings of Sheba and Seba offering gifts; yea, he saw all kings falling down before Him; all nations serving Him.

He saw Christ asking for and receiving the heathen for an inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for a possession.

These and many similar passages can have but one meaning, and that is, that the Kingdom of Christ is to embrace all kindreds, and peoples and nations of the earth; that His reign is to become universal, and that His righteousness is to prevail in all the earth.

And then, turning to the New Testament, and examining the utterances of our Lord, we find that His view of His mission and work; the extent of His kingdom and universality of His reign is in fullest accord with the broadest of the Old Testament predictions. "And I if I be lifted up from the earth will draw all men unto Me," can mean nothing less than universal dominion over the hearts of men.

When the disciples asked when this age should end, He assured them that it would not be until the Gospel should have been preached in all the world, for a witness unto all nations, and with this the commission delivered to the church is in perfect agreement. "All power is given unto me, go ye therefore into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature and lo, I am with you always even unto the end of the world."

This, then is our authority for asserting that the mission of the church is nothing less than to make known the good news to every man.

This is our guarantee for believing that the Gospel of the grace of God that has triumphed in the past, not by allying itself with man's inclinations and natural tendencies, but in spite of the fact, that it has set itself squarely against every corrupt desire and ambition of the human heart, will continue to triumph even more gloriously in the future. Or in the beautiful figure of Carlyle, "Like the melody of music which floats far beyond the discords, this, which is so sweet to ever conscientious souls—however wrong headed he may be—will float ever widening down the ages until the world is full of its sweetness."

The Relation of the Christian's Wealth to the Progress of the Kingdom.

Rev. Rupert Osgood Morse, M. A.

Rom. 12:11. In diligence, not slothful; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord.

2 Cor. 8:5. But first they gave their own selves unto the Lord, and to us by the will of God.

These two texts give us, the one, the secret of the acquisition, the other, the secret of the administration of the Christian's wealth.

The term "wealth" as here used applies to that which has immediate purchasing power. It does not include the devotion of the Christian's time, energy, mental and spiritual powers to direct effort for the promotion of the kingdom. Taken thus our topic readily divides into two parts, viz:

The relation of the Christian's wealth to the progress of the kingdom—

1. In the acquisition of that wealth.

2. In the administration of that wealth.

Or to imply more forcible Anglo-Saxon, in the getting and the using of wealth.

1. The Getting of the Christian's Wealth: How is the Christian to get his wealth? By working for it! "In diligence not slothful; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord." Here is the Gospel of work. It is still needed. Wealth is the product of work. The capital of today is the product of yesterday's labor. The only honest means for the production of wealth is labor. Hence the Gospel of work. Laziness and shiftlessness are sins which rebound against the one who commits them.

And the Christian ought to work along most remunerative lines. "In diligence not slothful." Here is a man, who working 200 days of the year ekes out an existence for himself and family. That man sins against God. He has one hundred days in which he may work thus adding largely to his income. Not to use this time diligently is to affront the Divine purpose. Here again is a hard working farmer, who by working worn-out lands by worn-out methods gathers a worn-out income of \$300, \$400 or \$500 a year. By inexpensive means his lands may be renewed while by the application of the methods of his up-to-date neighbor he may produce from his farm an income of \$600, \$800, or \$1,000, thus insuring generous offerings to the work of the kingdom and a comfortable support for his family. Though his worn-out lands and worn-out methods may be sacred to the memory of ten generations of ancestors, to continue in them is to sin, because he is not intelligently using what God has entrusted to him. If one would get something to use for the development of the

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