

of the Scriptures and to the expression of Bible truth in practical terms. The policy of putting on dogmatic blinkers when we look into the Bible will assuredly fail to influence men to-day. We have been, perhaps, a little too fond of heresy hunts, and it has worked us harm. Let us open our minds to the truth of God from whatever quarter it may come. Let us rid ourselves of theological prejudice. Let us be willing to allow the light of any kind of learning to beat upon the sacred page, and be confident that the Word of God will speak all the more clearly if we are willing to listen to it with open minds as well as open hearts. If we spend our time in trying to understand those who differ from us, rather than in cursing them roundly for heretics, we shall be a little nearer the spirit of our Master, Christ. And if we, in His spirit, open our minds and hearts to the reception of His message: if we take our stand upon the teaching of Jesus intelligently understood: if we apply our principles fearlessly: if we do these things, we may safely claim to have a distinct message for these modern times.

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The Missionary Appeal for To-day.

WHEN William Carey one hundred and thirty years ago published his "Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians to use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens," the attitude of mind which he had to face in his readers was in many respects very different from that which confronts one who to-day commends the missionary enterprise to the conscience of Christian people. The evolutionary view of the history of the world, the comparative study of religions, the critical examination of the sacred literatures of the world, and a more general and more intimate knowledge of life in foreign lands, are all features of the modern situation which were absent from that in the midst of which Carey wrote.

One often hears it suggested that these new factors have greatly weakened the force of the old arguments in support of missions. The object of this article is to consider whether this is really true, and to set forth as clearly as possible the reasons for still believing in full view of the larger knowledge of to-day, that foreign missionary work is an integral part of the responsibility of the Christian Church. With the inevi-

table antagonism of the non-Christian man of the world to foreign missions and to all for which they stand we are not here concerned. Our argument is addressed to Christian people. Why should the Christian men and women of to-day feel it incumbent upon them "to use means for the conversion of the heathens"?

I.

Our first and main reason must still be found where Carey found his, in our Lord's evident intention that His gospel should be declared to all men. Christ's will must be the law of life for all who have committed themselves to Him. If, therefore, it is His desire that His name and teaching should be proclaimed throughout the world, there can be no doubt that it is our plain duty to do anything we can towards the accomplishment of this purpose.

It is important that we should realise that the proof that Christ intended His kingdom to be world-wide does not depend merely upon the oft-quoted commission to His disciples to "go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." Even if we were to accept the view of many modern scholars that we have no certainty that Christ ever spoke these words, we should still be entitled to say with confidence that they are merely the formal statement of an idea which underlies the whole of His teaching.

It is true that there is a school of thought which bids us see in Christ a teacher whose horizon did not stretch beyond the narrow limits of Israel. Those who hold this view maintain that but for Paul Christianity would never have been anything but a Jewish sect. We must admit that Paul certainly was in God's providence the means of preventing the Gospel from being cramped and fettered by the narrow nationalism of some of the other leaders of the early Church. But in the controversy on this point it was Paul rather than his opponents who represented the mind of Christ Himself. The universalism of Paul is implicit in the whole of the teaching of his Master. To suppose that our Lord limited His outlook and His conception of His mission within the bounds of a single people is to reduce His teaching as to God and man to absurdity. The great principles of the Gospel preached by Christ are either of universal application, or they are meaningless. In his attack upon the Judaisers in the primitive Church Paul was not adding any new element to the Gospel, but was simply stating in definite form one of its fundamental principles, and saving it from the kind of perversion and distortion which the teaching of a great soul only too often suffers at the hands of his smaller-minded followers. The open secret

of God's will, that He purposed in the fulness of the times to sum up all things in heaven and in earth under the headship of Christ, was revealed to Paul, not as a new truth, but as the innermost meaning of the truth already proclaimed in the words and deeds, in the life and death and resurrection of Christ Himself.

Here then we have the fundamental justification of the belief that it is the Church's bounden duty to preach Christ to the ends of the earth. *Hoc Christus vult*; this is the will of Christ Himself; and that being so, there cannot be for any man or body of men, calling Him Master, any hesitation or turning back until His will is completely carried into effect.

II.

If it is clear that loyalty to Christ demands that we claim the whole world for Him, it is no less clear that we owe it to our fellow-men everywhere to share with them the life we have in Him. If Christ is to Christians what they claim He is, and if they have learnt from Him that the only true life is a life of service rendered to one's fellow-men, it follows inevitably that all Christian people are debtors both to Greeks and to barbarians, that they cannot rest so long as any man in any land is left in ignorance of Him.

It is sometimes suggested that this missionary motive, the motive of compassion towards our fellow-men, has lost a good deal of its force in these modern times because we nowadays take more hopeful views of the ultimate destiny of those who have never heard of Christ, and therefore cannot be charged with rejecting Him.

There was a time when Christian people had no doubt that every human being who had not definitely and formally during his earthly life accepted Christ as his Saviour, would be eternally lost. There are, of course, still Christians who profess to believe this, and who base their missionary appeals upon the belief. But many of us, perhaps most of us nowadays, prefer to believe with Peter that "in every nation he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted with Him"; or with Paul, that "when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves, which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel"; or with our Lord Himself, that "many shall come from the east and the west, and shall sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven." We feel

that there is far more hope both in this world and in the next for many a man who has never heard the name of Christ, than for those who have knowingly rejected Him, or for those who know Him and profess to serve Him, but do nothing to make Him known to others. We refuse to accept the view which appears to be suggested by the more hysterical type of missionary appeal, that God will condemn anyone to perish everlastingly because someone else takes a necessary furlough.

But does our acceptance of this more liberal and, as it seems to us, more Christian view, mean that we are therefore bound to be less eager to spread the knowledge of God's love in Christ, and to win men to love Him in return? It is a remarkable fact that missionary enthusiasm was at its lowest ebb in the ages when Christians were most positive in consigning to eternal perdition not only all those who had not accepted Christ, but even all those who did not hold the same opinions about Him as themselves;¹ whereas in these later days when more generous views prevail, the cause of foreign missions is receiving ever-increasing support from all sections of the Church. We are less inclined, perhaps, to dogmatise about the details of the last judgment; but we have found in Christ such joy and peace and power that we simply cannot keep Him to ourselves.

III.

Let us turn now to a consideration of the value which missionary effort has in relation to the life of the Church itself.

(a) A self-centred Christian Church involves as complete a contradiction in terms as a self-centred Christian. In proportion as a Church cares only for itself it is less than Christian; for, whatever other legitimate tests of vital Christianity there may be, it is quite certain that the one supreme proof that any man or body of men has a right to the name Christian, is to be found in the possession of the mind and spirit of Christ Himself, who came "not to be ministered unto but to minister and to give His life a ransom for many." The Church that does not reach out, in proportion to its power and opportunity, to great enterprises for the good

¹Dr. Weitbrecht Stanton in the *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, vol. viii., page 728, points out that from the 16th to the 18th century the Reformed Churches were doing practically nothing in the way of foreign missionary work. "Indeed, their divines, when they touched the subject of the Christian obligation to evangelize the world, were mainly occupied in elaborating arguments to show that the command of Christ to do this had lapsed in their day."

of the whole human race, can scarcely claim to be the representative of, or hope to obtain the approval and blessing of Him who said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." And as a matter of actual experience, it is found that the spiritual prosperity of the Church always varies in direct ratio to the intensity of its care for the world for which Christ died.

(b) The foreign missionary enterprise has for the Church a particular value and importance in the region of apologetics and Christian evidences. It is from the foreign mission field that we get the most striking and convincing experimental proofs of the redemptive and regenerative efficacy of the Gospel. True, the Gospel has its triumphs in our own land. But the influence of Christ has become so inseparable a part of our environment, that we often fail to see how much we owe to it; whereas upon the mission field it comes on the scene as a new force, and it is more easy to argue from cause to effect. Moreover, if Christ is really the Saviour of men, He is the Saviour of the world. If the Gospel is really what the Church claims it to be, it must be capable of meeting the needs of men all over the world; it must be valid for all mankind. When the Church sends forth its missionaries to the ends of the earth and the Lord Jesus Himself works with them, confirming the word with signs following, this testimony to His saving power is a most effective means of building up the Church and establishing its faith.

(c) If Christ is the Saviour of the world, and not merely of a particular section of it, it follows that the whole world must be brought into relation with Him before all the meaning of His salvation can be made clear. No merely sectional, national, or racial view of Christ can be regarded as containing all the truth. Not until every nation and tribe and tongue has made its own distinctive contribution to the interpretation of the incarnate Word of God will the Church Universal be able to enter into her whole heritage, and possess the full-orbed truth of God. We need the help of India and China and Africa if we are to realise the fulness of the riches that are in Christ. Without them we cannot be made perfect. There are aspects of Christian truth and experience that we have overlooked, and other aspects to which, perhaps, we have given undue prominence. We need to correct our own interpretation by the experience of races that approach Christ from a different angle, as it were, and are therefore able to see in Him beauties that we have missed. And so, in order to enlarge her own vision of Christ, if for no other reason, the Church must reach out to the ends of the earth, and call men and women of all nations to explore with her the unsearchable riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God, which have been made available for mankind in Christ Jesus.

IV.

Not only for her own sake, but for the sake of the world, the Church must find room in her plans for foreign missions; for it is only so that she can perform her divinely appointed function of leading the world towards the ideal of a redeemed and regenerated humanity, so that it may become what God meant it to be—a true commonwealth of nations.

During the last few years it has been brought home to us as never before, that the world is one, that no nation can live to itself. There are some short-sighted people who, in face of the difficult problems that arise from inter-racial rivalries and colour prejudices, advocate a policy of segregation, on the principle that the best way to obviate friction is to avoid contact. But we may as well make up our minds that this is an impossible policy. Mankind is one, and as one it must work out its destiny. Nothing that happens to one nation, no fresh experiment that it initiates, no discovery that it makes, no new movement of thought that affects it, can be without its significance for, and its influence upon, all the other nations of the world. A nation that is depraved and demoralised not only loses its own soul, but it becomes a cancerous growth, eating into the moral life of humanity. If we allow ourselves for a moment to imagine a China, or a Japan, or an India, equipped with all the material and resources of modern civilization, but untouched by the Christian gospel, we shall realize at once that, even if there were no other reason for Christian missions, for our own sakes and for the sake of humanity at large, we dare not leave any part of the world outside the range of the Church's missionary activity.

V.

An objection to foreign missionary work, of which one hears a good deal nowadays, is that those who advocate it and engage in it lose sight of the lofty truths and elevating ethical teaching to be found in many non-Christian religions. Moreover, it is urged that even in the popular religion of uncultured tribes there is a beautiful primitive simplicity, well-suited to the needs of unspoiled children of nature, and that it is a pity to disturb this simplicity and to attempt to impose upon these people an alien system of thought. Such ideas are an outcome of the more thorough and sympathetic study of non-Christian religions which has been undertaken by scholars of late years. We have been presented with collections of gems of thought gathered from the Scriptures of Buddhism, Hinduism, Mahomedanism, and other non-Christian faiths, and we have been asked how we can have the impertinence to preach our views to people capable of such thought, and to talk of them as pagans who need evangelising.

It is, of course, quite easy to reply that this view ex-

aggerates the amount of lofty moral enthusiasm and true religious insight to be found in the non-Christian religions. We may point out that the small quantity of gold is buried in a great accumulation of dross, that the value of such truth as these religions contain is neutralised by a far greater mass of error, and that the actual ethical outcome of their teaching in the life of non-Christian societies is extremely unsatisfactory.

But it may be doubted whether such a reply, *if it is all that we have to say*, is either quite fair or quite wise. If, as we profess to believe, God loves the whole world, and would have all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth, it would surely be very surprising, to say the least, if He had left Himself quite without witness in any age or country. There is no need to depreciate or belittle anything that is true or beautiful or uplifting wherever we may find it. There is nothing good in man's life or thought in any land, but it has come from God. Unwillingness on our part to recognize this would bring us perilously near to the sin against the Holy Spirit, who has most assuredly been at work in every land, and has left evidences of His working in some places where we should never have thought of looking for them. It is true that again and again we find the thoughts of man's sinful heart mingling with, and counteracting and confusing the truth of God. But we ought frankly to recognize that this phenomenon is not peculiar to the non-Christian religions. The Bible itself is one long record of a progressive revelation; in it we can trace the way in which God's truth gradually disentangled itself from human imaginings, until in the fulness of the times the Divine Word became incarnate and dwelt among men. And even now, we do well to remind ourselves, we have this treasure in earthen vessels. The truth as it is in Jesus is mingled in the minds of all of us with more or less of human error; and the name and sanction of Christianity have been claimed, and still are claimed for many things which certainly do not tend to impress the non-Christian nations with a sense of the superiority of the Gospel over their own faiths. If, when our attention is called to lofty teaching or undoubted truths to be found in the non-Christian religions, we can only reply by pointing to degradation and immorality existing in non-Christian lands, we can scarcely be surprised if the apologist for paganism points in turn to some of the scandals, not only of our Western civilisation, but also of our Christian Churches.

The only fair way in which to judge of any religion is to estimate it by its highest expressions and achievements, and not by its lowest. The missionary need not be afraid to thank God for anything that he finds of truth and divine illumination in any non-Christian faith. He may take it and use it as a

beginning on which to build. We cannot too often remind ourselves that, after all, it is to actual human experience that we always have to come back if we would find a solid foundation for religious thought. The missionary carries with him to the foreign land his own experience of Christ and His Gospel, together with the story of the experience of the Christian Church throughout the ages. In that land he meets individuals and a nation also possessing an experience. This, if he is wise, he does not set out to decry; he rather seeks to approach it with sympathy and respect, realising that it is in this experience that he must find some point of attachment for his own message. He endeavours to obtain a pooling of experience, a comparing of notes. He frankly concedes the possibility that he may have something to learn, as well as something to teach, and he is not in such a hurry to teach as to leave himself no chance to learn. He will encourage the people, to whom he has come, to share with him their experience, so that he may know how to communicate his own to them. He will realise that without mutual respect his position becomes an impossible and even an impertinent one.

Certainly if the Christ of whom the missionary comes to speak be indeed the Saviour of the world, there can be nothing to fear from this way of presenting. His claims upon the human heart, for He needs only to be truly known to be loved and trusted and worshipped; and the line of approach suggested above is the surest way of getting the non-Christian to come into vital touch with Him.

This conception of missionary work frees it from any attitude of patronising superiority towards the people to whom the missionary goes. If they have already met in their own religious books or in their personal experience any of the truth and beauty that are in Christ, the missionary can gladly welcome this as proof that God's Spirit has been there before him, as part of the Old Testament of human experience which God has been writing in every land, and which He can and does use as a pedagogue to lead men to Christ.

There is no need that a people should disown its history or cut itself adrift from its past when it comes to Christ. It should rather find in Christ the fulfilment of all those things towards which it has been, sometimes consciously and sometimes unconsciously, striving in the past. For Christ is Himself the centre and key of all human history and experience. Everything that was before Him led up to His appearing, and everything since has been for the unfolding of His meaning and value for man and for the hastening of the time when all things, whether in earth or in heaven, shall be summed up under His headship, and every tongue shall confess Him to the glory of God the Father.

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