

Messenger and Visitor

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The Gospel and Missions.

The starting point for world evangelization may be said to have been at Antioch and in connection with events which are recorded in the Sunday School lesson for the current week. It is to be observed that the initial impulse toward world-wide mission work on its human side resulted from an active spiritual condition and a deep religious earnestness. It was not out of any spiritual apathy on the part of the leading spirits among the Christians of Antioch, or a mere desire for new experiences that Paul and Barnabas were led to turn their faces westward that they might carry the message of Christ to distant communities. It was while, in profound devotion of spirit, "they ministered to the Lord and fasted" that there came the unmistakable call of the Spirit to a wider service. And is it not always so? It is to the earnest souls and the earnest communities that the call of God to larger service comes. It is to such hearts and to such communities that God reveals himself and the voice of the Spirit is heard to speak. It is to those who are most earnestly and faithfully making use of the talents committed to their trust that the wider doors of opportunity are swung open. Very likely doors are sometimes opened which cannot be regarded as the response of Heaven to an earnest spirit ready for whatever of service or sacrifice the Lord may appoint, and enterprises are undertaken in the name of Christ in which human motives are the determining factor. It is a great thing in respect to any of our undertakings to have the assurance that the impulse toward it has originated in an approach of the human spirit, in holy communion and consecration to the Spirit of God. Missions that have such a beginning may, like that of Paul's, be attended with great hardships and fierce conflicts, but the results are always worth more than all they cost. What did man ever undertake that was better worth the doing than that missionary enterprise inaugurated at Antioch?

It seems important to observe how distinctly the church or Christian community is, so to speak, taken into partnership by the Holy Spirit in this work of world-wide evangelization. It was not to Paul and Barnabas alone that the call of the Spirit came, but to the praying church at Antioch. It is not recorded that the Spirit said to those men who were to be the pioneers of world-wide mission work, "Arise and go," but to the church it was said—"Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them." And that call to partnership in the work of evangelization was accepted by the church at Antioch, and when its representatives had fasted and prayed and laid their hands upon the apostles they sent them away. Mission work is, accordingly, rightly regarded by us as a work of the church. It is not the work of apostles only or of those who have felt the impulse of the Spirit upon them to make Christ known among the heathen, but every church, and every humblest member of it, may share in the honor and blessing of being a herald of Christ's gospel to the peoples of the regions beyond. The missionaries who have gone out from us to evangelize the Telugus are not in India merely because the Spirit of God impelled them to go there, but also because God has taken us as a denomination into partnership with himself in saving the Telugus. We have sent forth our missionaries in the name of the Lord, they are our representatives there, every repulse they meet with is a repulse for us, and every victory which

they gain is a triumph also for us. Is it possible to think of a Christian heart uninterested in such a work or contributing a pittance grudgingly to its support. Is it not the Christian's supreme privilege and his supreme opportunity for investment, that he may be a worker together with God for the evangelization of the world?

The religion of Jesus Christ contains the principle and power of self-propagation. It is not merely a treasure that enriches, but a leaven that permeates, a seed that grows. It is not merely a draught of water for a thirsty soul, but a living fountain that sends forth its waters for the refreshment of the dry places around it. The revelation of God in Jesus Christ is a GOSPEL, and because it is a gospel—a glad-tidings—it is something to be PREACHED. It is God's message—GOD'S MESSAGE OF LOVE TO THE WORLD. The good news is not for one only, but for all nations. The love message is not for any one kindred or people or tribe or nation, but for every creature in all the world. The impulse of the heart to which this revelation of love is made is to tell it abroad. So the story has passed from heart to heart, from lip to lip, from shore to shore. It was impossible but that, beginning at Jerusalem, the proclamation of the gospel should reach all Judea and Samaria and the uttermost parts of the earth. To the spirit of the gospel no condition of humanity is common or unequal, and of the great human family none are so humble or so degraded that the gospel of the grace of God is not for them. Therefore the Spirit and the church proclaim the glad-tidings that whosoever will may take the water of life freely.

A Little Hard to Satisfy.

Our contemporary the *Casket*, we observe, charges us with "evasion" and "shuffling" as to the little controversy which has been going on between us in reference to the grounds on which the Baptists of these Provinces support the Grande Ligne Mission. As we see the matter, however, there has been nothing of that kind on our part, but the *Casket* has quite failed to make out its contention, that the mission, or the advocacy of it in our columns, was based on the assumption that Roman Catholics as such were destitute of any saving knowledge of religious truth. What we have said in regard to the matter is in substance that we did not hold such a belief in regard to Roman Catholics, but that there were quite sufficient grounds for the endorsement and support of the Grande Ligne Mission and its work apart from assuming the universally hopeless condition of Roman Catholics. Also, that in respect to certain words which appeared in an article contributed to this paper, while we did not hold ourselves responsible for all the views our correspondents might express, yet as to those words, which the *Casket* had contended signified that Catholics, by virtue of their being such, were lost, no fair interpretation could invest them with such meaning, nor did we believe that the writer of them held such a view. This the *Casket* admits as to the meaning of the words in themselves, but contends that logically they must mean what it charged, inasmuch as they are used to encourage a mission of a general character to Roman Catholics, and that it must be impossible for Baptists to distinguish among Roman Catholics as to who are and who are not in a state of salvation. The *Casket* is doubtless astute enough to perceive that in taking such a position it is venturing on very thin ice. If the Apostles had proceeded upon such ground as that Christianity could have had no message for the Jews, for how could it be presumed that the Jews as such were without any saving knowledge of truth? The justification of a mission does not depend upon its shedding forth light where before there was absolute darkness, but upon the missionary's ability to give to those who receive his message an essentially larger and fuller measure of truth than that which was before possessed. Admitting that there are Roman Catholics who have believed on Christ to the saving of their souls, that is not to say that Christianity has no more to give them. It is just possible that in respect to what we are about to say our esteemed contemporary will not agree with us—the more's the pity—but it seems very clear to us that if every Roman Catholic, priest and laymen, in the Province of Quebec could enter into the light

and liberty of the gospel as it is possessed and proclaimed by Baptists, it would be a matter of gain incalculable to every individual soul of them, as well as to the whole country and the world at large. We do not know just what would satisfy our esteemed contemporary in this matter, but it would seem to be this,—that Baptists as well as other Protestants should recognize Roman Catholics, "by virtue of their being such," as being in a condition of salvation, and their religious teachers, by virtue of their being such, as "instructors of the foolish and teachers of babes," in respect to all the peoples of the world, so that while it is an insufferable impertinence for a Baptist or other Protestant to institute a mission for the benefit of Roman Catholics, it is most proper and praiseworthy for Roman Catholics to carry on missions for the conversion of Protestants. Is that it?

Editorial Notes.

—The statistical reports of the Wesleyan Methodist church of Great Britain indicate a very encouraging increase in membership for the past year. The numerical increase for the year is given as 8,136, which, it is said, is the largest in nineteen years. These figures have reference to fully accredited members of the society. The increase is not confined to any particular part of the country but is quite general.

—Dictionaries are not by any means a modern invention, as appears by the fact that among the numerous tablets unearthed in recent explorations upon the site of ancient Babylon is one which has been found to contain a large part of a lexicon in which the Babylonian cuneiform characters are rendered into, or explained by, Sumerian and Semitic words set in parallel columns. This lexicon, it is expected, will be of much value for the deciphering of the important cuneiform literature and for the correcting of mistakes which may have occurred in the rendering of those portions of it which have been translated.

—In noting the favorable report for the past year as to the condition of the Wesleyan Methodist body in Great Britain, the *British Weekly* remarks: "We are convinced that Nonconformity in all its branches is gradually perfecting its organization, moving with the times, remedying weak points, and so becoming in every sense of the word, efficient. The prospect for the new century is thus very hopeful. There would be no hope in the situation if it were not that ministers and Christian workers all over the churches are increasingly convinced that it is only by the power of the Spirit that they can live and grow, that all subsidiary means are useless except as held and employed in His hands."

—In a recent sermon Rev. A. A. Cameron of the First Baptist Church, Ottawa, alluded to the fact that a number of his church and congregation attended the theatre frequently, and is reported as saying that he considered that he had as much right to enjoy the amusements of the theatre as any member of his congregation. If, however, there was anything objectionable in the theatre, he did not see why the members of his church had any more right to countenance it by their presence than he had. If it was all right for the members of the church to attend the theatre, then it was right also for the minister, and if it was wrong for the minister to attend, then it was just as much wrong for the members. This strikes us as a fair and sensible view of the matter. If the theatre provides a harmless and wholesome kind of amusement, if it ministers rest and recreation to jaded minds and exerts a refining and educative influence upon its devotees, who needs this helpful ministry more than the minister? But if the atmosphere of the theatre is not wholesome for the minister, we may be sure that it is not wholesome for his people. We fear that there are a good many professing Christians who go upon the principle that some sort of indulgence is granted them to engage in amusement or courses of conduct which would be quite unseemly and condemnable in their minister. The sooner they divest themselves of such ideas the better for their own welfare as well as for the church.

—Dr. George Munro Grant, Principal of Queens College, Kingston, Ont., died on Saturday last. For some time past Dr. Grant had been broken in health. Last autumn for a time his life seemed to hang in the balance. He rallied from that but another severe attack of the same trouble recently, necessitating a serious surgical operation, left little hope that his constitution could bear up under the shock. The announcement of his death accordingly was not unexpected. Dr. Grant was born at Stellarton, Pictou County, N. S., in 1835. His father, a Scotchman by birth, taught the village school. He received his education at Pictou Academy and Glasgow University, and having entered the ministry, returned to this country and for a time ministered to the congregation of the Presbyterian church at Georgetown, P. E. I. Thence he was called to St. Matthew's church, Halifax,