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Delivered by His Grace THE ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY at the S. P. G. Society's Anniversary in St. James's Hall, on Thursday, May 31st, 1898.



HERE is a wonderful satisfaction in seeing year after year how large a meeting comes to this annual gathering, and how many seem to take so deep and warm an interest, and to hear from the report how steadily the work continues to go on growing, as it were almost without any impulse except that which comes in men's hearts from the Lord Himself: growing daily by a kind of, I was going to say, mechanical law, but I would rather say supernatural law, with which men are deeply concerned, but which men cannot regulate. And now the call which is made to us seems to be raising the whole Church more and more to understand, and to rise up in spirit to the level of the great task which our Heavenly Father and our Saviour, the Lord of the Church, has put upon our shoulders.

The meeting of the Lambeth Conference last year made it impossible for any Christian, who knew anything at all of what was there transacted, and who took sufficient interest to watch what was published in consequence of that meeting, to fail to observe how this great gathering of Bishops from the whole surface of the globe seemed to speak of a Divine expansion of the Church. And every expansion calls to still greater labor and to still greater self-sacrifice, and gives a promise of still greater fruits, because as we grow we cannot help comparing ourselves with the now known limits and boundaries of the habitation of man, and we see now put before us unmistakably how large the human race is, and how little of it is yet brought to the knowledge of the Cross.

How can we, who have learned that the knowledge of the Cross is the one supreme knowledge which ought to rule above all other knowledge that can be conceived, fail to be moved when we see that there is still great darkness spreading over so large a proportion of the human family, and that our progress in carrying the light into their regions is comparatively so slow?

How can we stand idle? The work which we have begun, the work, indeed, which was begun very nearly two hundred years ago, and which has grown in the quiet way which illustrates the parable of the mustard-seed, seems to be filled with a new spirit every year. I think that Christians are beginning to see now what we ought to have seen before this—that the Church, if it is,

indeed, to be a living Church, cannot continue to be so slack as we have hitherto been in spreading the knowledge of Christ through all the nations whom it is possible for us to reach.

The great gathering of the Bishops last year represented to us a work far greater than we had been able to conceive before. The few who have the management of this Society no doubt knew, and could have told you at any time, what it was that was going on; but the great body of the Church of England has not yet learned, and has not yet been awake to learn, what it is that we are called upon to do, and how imperative the call is.

If it were possible by one single appeal to rouse the hearts of all Christians who believe in the Communion of Saints and in the work of the Holy Catholic Church, or if it were possible to rouse every individual who belongs to this Church of ours to a real sense of the duty incumbent upon himself, even then we should not be able to say that we had surpassed that which the Lord has commanded, or that we had fully discharged our duty and might be content with what we had done. We are far from that.

Although here there is a great meeting of those who are supporting this Society, yet what is this meeting to the whole membership of the Church of England?

How is it that we have so few all over the country who really care about the matter?

What are the clergy doing that they have not yet stirred up their people to a stronger sense of what the Lord requires? Why is it that this subject is not brought a great deal more often to the notice of all the congregations that the Church contains?

Why is it that we are so slack to make men see this most glorious mission that the Lord has ever conferred upon man—the mission of making His message known to every soul that is descended from Adam, this great mission which, in His wonderful and mysterious wisdom, He has seen fit to intrust to the agency of men who call themselves His? Why is it that we are so slack to make this felt everywhere as one of the ordinary duties of the Christian life, from which no Christian has any right to withdraw his labor, his self-sacrifice, and his prayers?

Why is it? It is because we are not yet more than half awake. It is because even now there are so few of us who seem to be penetrated with the importance and the imperative nature of the Lord's command. There are so few of us, in comparison with the great body of the Church,