

# The Canadian Independent.

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1 July 81

ONE IS YOUR MASTER, EVEN CHRIST, AND ALL YE ARE BRETHREN.

Vol. 30.]

TORONTO, THURSDAY, JULY 7, 1881.

[New Series. No. 1

## THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH.

We have pleasure in giving to our readers in this issue the first of three instalments of Rev. J. M. Roy's paper, read before the Union, upon the Mission of the Church: Whether all positions may be accepted or not, the paper is worthy of far more than a passing glance. Devout, thoughtful, practically suggestive, and studiously prepared, every sentence has its place, every thought its further suggestion. May it have a mission among us and its talented author a blessing!—Ed.

The Church of God, in its widest sense, consists of all who do not reject Him, but who, so far as they know Him, fear God and work righteousness. Children, even infants, of whom little more can be predicated than that they do not reject Him, are "of the kingdom," and Cornelius was accepted before Peter met him. The Church of Christ consists of all who, consciously or unconsciously, follow Jesus Christ. "Other sheep have I," said He, "that are not of this fold." There were persons beyond the realm of His enrolled disciples, who caught dim glimpses of the truth He taught, and followed that truth so far as they knew it, though they had not heard of Him. These, too, were His sheep, spirits akin to His own. [For the purposes of this paper, I use the term Church to signify, not an organization, but all those persons who consciously and voluntarily follow Jesus.

The very terms of the definition show that the question to be treated is not the mission of a church, or congregation, nor that of the churches, or denominational groups of congregations, but the mission of the whole body of Christian believers. It thus becomes a question of Christian Solidarity, as distinct from that of Christian Individualism.

The term Solidarity has come to us from French jurisprudence, and signifies the unity of different persons who are bound by mutual interests and responsibilities. There is a singular coincidence between the first use of the cognate French verb *solidariser* and the circumstances which give importance to the word in its application to Christian work to-day. The first quotation given by Littré in illustration of the meaning of that verb is as follows: "All the notaries in each district should be consolidated (*solidariser*), in order to render them scrupulous in the admission of their colleagues." To-day, if anything gives weight to the question of solidarity in Christian churches, it is the need which Christian workers feel of being scrupulously careful in the admission to fellowship of men who may entail upon their companions consequences that may seriously compromise them all. [The two questions of Individualism, or the sphere within which private judgment may exert its influence, and Solidarity are amongst the most vital of the questions now being agitated. Individuals have their functions. Has society any? If so, what are they? These very questions show that when we attempt to decide the mission of the Church, we enter at once upon questions of political economy; for the Church has its politics, as well as the State. Let any number of followers of Christ exist, then there is a church, even though no organization should bind them together; and each faithful follower of the Redeemer retains his membership

in that church, in the sight of God, whatever combinations his fellows may choose to form for common objects, or however they may exclude him from such combinations. Combinations and organizations do not constitute the Church, though the Church, if circumstances demand it, may form such organizations. Is there any common object from which, if any individual separates himself, he thereby forfeits his discipleship, his membership in the Church of Christ? If so, has society a right to see that he seek that object, and if he do not, to excommunicate him? Then, what is that object, and what means may society take to promote it?

Professor Jevons says: "It would be a most important work, if it were possible, to decide exactly what undertakings a government should take upon itself, and what it should leave to the free action of other people; but it is impossible to lay down any precise rules upon this subject." These remarks are as applicable to Church government as to secular politics. There are functions which society may or may not assume, as circumstances determine; but there are functions which society *must* assume. As Professor Jevons puts it, the functions of government are either necessary or optional.

In treating of the sphere of Solidarity in the Christian Church, of the functions of Christian Society, of the Mission of the Church, I can do no more in this paper than confine myself to an outline of general principles.

First, then, what is the object of Christian society? Why did Christ found a church? The answer to this is in the two words, Righteousness and Truth. The amelioration of the world's manners was the grand aim of the Saviour. Of course, it will be understood that I do not use the term "manners" in the narrow sense given to it in works on Etiquette, but rather to represent all our methods of thought, feeling, will and action. Christ came to establish a type of character, and to promote the development of that character in the earth. That type of character, that righteousness, was not limited by the peculiarities of national patriotism or philosophic sects. It was neither local nor temporary. It was human. But it was more: it was divine. He who analyzes all the characters of Jew and Gentile, and separates the accidental from the universal, will find that, even when he has portrayed the universal characteristics of humanity, he and all men must confess that "to err is human." Evil is not the necessary concomitant of human nature; for one perfect man has shown the opposite; but it is universal apart from that one; and though a perfect standard of right may be found in an ideal humanity, it has never been found in actual humanity, except in the one case in which that ideal humanity was realized, the one case in which the human and the divine were perfectly united, Christ Himself. Christ, therefore, did not confine His efforts to the endeavour to establish a standard of righteousness which could be elicited by eliminating from human conduct all but what is common to the race. His standard was the divine, the principles that are carried out by God in the government of the universe. It was a righteousness that did not confine itself to outward performances, but had its seat in the inner character, the intellect, the affections, the will. It was a

righteousness that found its best exponent, not so much in the words the Saviour spoke as in the general current of His life, the spirit that breathed through all He was and did, the ideal of which He was the fleshly embodiment.

To realize and promote that ideal goodness in the world is the Church's work on earth: this is what is meant by the salvation Christ came to bring, and for which the Church has been called into existence.

But the universal spread of an ideal depends upon two things, the truth of the ideal, and the world's belief of that truth. Hence our Lord placed as much emphasis on Truth as He did upon Righteousness. The motto of one of our Canadian Colleges is *Studia abeunt in Mores*. This may be freely rendered,

—Moral are the outgrowth of Convictions. The hope of the world's salvation depends upon the world's acceptance of the truth. What is the central germ truth on which the prevalence of Christ's standard of righteousness must be founded? Simply that His standard of character is the divine. In Him the divine ideal was realized. When you have gathered together, from a sympathetic study of His life, all the motives and principles that actuated Him, you perceive that, in that frail body, as in a tent, there dwelt all the fulness of God's divineness of character: *πᾶρ τὸ πλήρωμα τῆς θεότητος*—all the fulness of the Godhead.

When we attempt to account for the phenomenon of this identity of the characters of Christ and of God, we enter the realm of speculative theology. All that may be involved in our decisions on this speculative point depends upon the assumptions, or faith, with which we start. Begin from the standpoint of bare humanity with the Socinians; and I see no outcome but Rationalism in the sense of a denial or ignoring of the supernatural. Begin from the pre-existent, the eternal the divine, revealing itself in humanity and through it; and the result must be all that is truly evangelica. Yet, however interesting this subject and many other subjects may be, and however legitimate, and for some purposes, necessary, may be the study of them, the imperative mission of the Church is not the propagation of this or that phase of speculative effort to explain causes of the facts of our Saviour's life, or this or that historical, scientific, or critical result of investigation. The Church's work is to satisfy the world that there is one divine, authoritative standard of right, revealed to us in Jesus Christ.—a truth which, when expanded from this, its brief scientific statement of fact, by the poetic power of Christian feeling and imagination, became the germ from which has sprung all that is good, and much that is bad, in our modern theology.—and, by all appropriate methods, to raise men to conformity to that divine type of goodness. Other subjects *must* be attended to: this *must*. It is the only one absolutely essential to human goodness, and is, therefore, imperative. This is the object of the Christian Church. To accomplish this is to save the souls of men.

(COMMUNICATED.)

## A CALL TO ARMS.

The report of the Statistical Secretary, read before the Union was not an encouraging one. Owing to the apathy

displayed by many churches in rendering returns, great difficulty was experienced in getting accurate statistics. It would appear, however, that to some slight extent Congregationalism in Canada has gained ground, but when the immense increase of our population is considered, nothing like the progress has taken place it might have been reasonable to expect. How is this? Whence comes this lack of aggressiveness? Are we degenerate sons of those ancestors who suffered, bled, and even died for conscience' sake? Truly, it is time we were up and doing, unless we are content to say of Canadian Congregationalism, Ichabod, our glory is departed!

It cannot be justly advanced, that as a body we have deteriorated as far as the purity of our doctrine, or the excellency of our polity is concerned.

But we most certainly are failing to take that place in the great Christian warfare around us, to which we are entitled by reason of our record in the past. Time was, we were the leaders of every forlorn hope, *now* we seem willing to form the rear guard. We want more "*esprit de corps*," especially on the part of our rank and file. Sectarianism, pure and simple, is to be deplored, but when we remember that we are *one* of the regiments of Christ's army, fighting the good fight of faith in Christ's cause, surely we can never rest content until, as in days of yore, we stand second to none.

It is time we threw apathy and indolence to the winds. It is time we once more stood shoulder to shoulder. It is time our colours were again unfurled. Our comrades, the Wesleyans, the Baptists, the Presbyterians, the Episcopalians, all honour to them, are enlisting soldiers of the cross in every direction. Our past history is as glorious a one in every respect as theirs, our captains are as well trained, our opportunities are equal, our place by right is in the van. Are we willing to relegate that honoured position to others? Emphatically, God forbid.

H.

WOMAN'S MISSION AID SOCIETY.—In connection with St. George's Episcopal Church in this city is a society whose objects are:—1st, to awaken among the women of the Church a deeper, more permanent, and more general interest in the work of missions, both Indian and foreign; 2, to show missionaries in the field that they have those who work, pray, and sympathize with them, and who testify this sympathy by practical aid; 3, to collect and forward funds for missionary purposes; 4, to diffuse information concerning the missionary work of the Church. The Society gave \$200 to the Algoma mission, and had also aided struggling parishes by pecuniary grants towards building churches and by contributions of clothes, church furniture, surplices, altarpieces, books, groceries, and articles for Christmas trees and the like, to poor missions in the dioceses of Toronto, Huron, Niagara, and Algoma, amounting in value to the sum of \$759.96. The ladies, who all give their time and other work free, have opened work-rooms in the Mechanic's Institute building, where, in addition to making articles for such purposes, they receive orders for ladies any needle and fancy work they wish to dispose of for their own many advantage.