

Selected.

THE MEANING OF MISSIONS.

A movement that has been the inspiration of so many heroic hearts from the first century to the last of our era, and that has every promise of increasing power through coming centuries, must have beneath it a profound meaning. This movement, starting with the commission of our Saviour, and never so great as to-day, is like such rivers of earth as grow in volume and increase in majesty in proportion to their distance from mountain to sea. The missionary movement is not a transient, but an age-long one; it is not a dwindling, but an increasing one, it is not a national, but an international and world-wide one.

As contrasted with other great movements, this, unlike the commercial one with its promise of gain, is spiritual with rather a promise of poverty; unlike political ones with the allurements of glory and power, this is fraternal with frequent inflictions of persecution and distress; and unlike wars of conquest, with their prospects of victory and destruction and plunder, this is the harbinger of peace and good will, the evangel of glory, honor and immortality.

What is the meaning that underlies this mighty movement, so contrary to all merely human enterprise; promising to the rich man no dividends on capital, but demanding of him gifts in fee simple; promising to churches no increase in membership, but possibly whole decades of praying and giving in order to the conversion of single souls in far-away lands; and offering to missionaries themselves a bare existence, hard work, a foreign residence, many deprivations, inevitable persecutions, possible death by disease or violence, and a doubtful old age—what can be the secret of it?

More than all else the Saviour himself is the answer to the question. The captaincy of the movement rests with the crucified and risen One, standing with pierced hands and feet and side among his wondering disciples, and saying, "All authority is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." As truly as Christ is Lord, this commission is felt to be imperative by all who are loyal to him. Paul felt it; the apostolic church felt it; and it was the realized imperativeness, the recognized urgency of it that made the ancient church a conquering power to such an extent that "the fires of its faith burned to the water's edge all round the Mediterranean and remade the Roman world."

And the modern church, as it issues from the gloom of the middle ages, and from the doctrinal vagaries of that long Roman Catholic period which may be likened to a nightmare, is rapidly coming to be one with the ancient church in its recognition of the captaincy of Christ, and the urgency of that commission wherein he gives the secret and

the sequence, the sum total and the climax of his own mission. The meaning of Christ's presence among his disciples is focused in the commission, and the meaning of the commission is the meaning of missions. What the commission commands missions seek to execute; what it expects they seek to create; and what it promises to humanity they seek to verify in eternity.

Missions are the media through which Christ's rightful authority and saving power are carried over from the ideal to the real among the nations of the earth. They are the King's means of asserting his kindness, the high priest's means of making known his high priestliness, the Saviour's means of winning to his hand and heart his blood-bought ones.

In this commission our command is to go and teach. Missions have therefore all the meaning that inheres in the teaching and student faculties among men. All that the pulpit, the platform, the press and the rostrum can mean, the Saviour means in his command to teach and preach. Among his last words before his crucifixion were these, "Put up the sword." Among his last words before his ascension were these, "Go teach." The methods of the teacher, the preachers the friend and the brother, are the methods of his conquest. His victories are those of truth over the minds, love over the heart, and righteousness over the consciences of men.

The Saviour includes baptism in the commission, and therefore all that it means missions must mean. All the faith and repentance that are proclaimed by it; the burial to sin and the resurrection to newness of life that are typified by it; the total reformation of conduct and consequent regeneration of manhood that proceed from it; the vows that precede it and the virtues that succeed it—all this must be included in the meaning of missions.

The meaning of missions must include the promised presence of Jesus with his believing ones. "Always, even unto the end of the world." This promised presence is conditioned upon obedience to the commission; that is, upon missions. The Saviour can not abide with a non-missionary, much less with an anti-missionary, soul or church, for the very spirit of inactivity and opposition is antagonistic to his spirit. It would seem that the only prayer that even he could frame for such a soul or church must be a repetition of the prayer for his murderers, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

The presence of Christ with his disciples, coupled with his disciplining of the whole world, means ultimately the "peace on earth and good will among men" of the angelic anthem sung at the Saviour's birth; it means the reunion of the severed disciples of Christ; the destruction of idolatry; the solution of our social problems; the brotherhood of man; the sisterhood of nations; the regency of righteousness, and the incoming of international peace. Too many of us have held mean views and small estimates of this theme. The philosophy of missions is the philosophy of the incarnation of our Saviour; of all the sermons and parables and prayers and miracles into which he threw the force of his life; of his death and resurrection; of his ascension and present regency; and of the living link that must exist between the Saviour and the saved to the end of time. The whole gospel is a missionary commission: the whole church is a missionary society; the whole world is a missionary field; time itself is a mission looking to eternity for its garnerings to God.—*Christian Standard.*

WHAT IS ATHEISM!

There are three kinds of atheism, intellectual, emotional and volitional; of the head, of the heart, of the life. The intellectual fool hath said in his head, there is no God; the emotional fool hath said in his heart, there is no God; the practical fool hath said in his life there is no God. Intellectualism in religion is virtual atheism in action. The theoretic atheist who has reached his position of disbelief in the existence of God by mental processes, by investigation of evidence as he considers, is not the worst kind of atheist. Hoine said there was no infidelity in Paris, for there was not enough interest in religion even to reject it. This sarcastic insinuation of the German thinker contains one of the profoundest of truths. The indifferentist who hasn't enough vital interest or faith in his own soul to register a volition against religion, who is so lacking in moral energy that he neither accepts nor rejects it, but lives in total apathy of all higher concerns, is the worst and most incorrigible species of atheist. The man who accepts Christianity upon theoretic grounds and has no further use for it is as much of an atheist as the man who rejects it upon theoretic ground and has no more use for it. He is worse, for he has the charges of hypocrisy and inconsistency to meet in addition to the crime of moral atheism in his life. The attempt to substitute intellectual belief in theological propositions for the living faith in unseen realities that unites the soul to God, is godlessness of the most aggravated type.

Animalism is atheism. To live in the flesh is to be without God and without hope in the world. Where the spiritual nature and the faith faculty have been atrophied by neglect and sensuous indulgence there is no real faith in the existence, much less in the immanence of God. The rejection of moral responsibility and the spiritual life is the rejection of God. The man who walks and acts as if there were no God to be loved or feared is an atheist. Those who practically ignore God, whose daily walk and conversation are what they would be if they knew there was no God are atheistic in the worst conceivable sense of the term. Paul's natural man is the typical atheist. To dispense with God in one's life is the worst kind of atheism, and it is to be feared, the average man does.

Pessimism is a species of atheism. The old debate whether this is a good world or a bad one still goes on, and in the mean time each man is doing much to make his own world. As a modern writer has said: "All is marvellous for the poet, all is divine for the saint, all great for the hero, all base for the base. The wicked man creates around him a pandemonium, the artist an Olympus, the elect a paradise, which each alone sees." The life within is the medium through which the world without is observed and interpreted. Amiel cried at forty-seven, "All the sum of my juvenile hopes fled; the outlook