

THE MONEY IDEA OF CHRISTIANITY.

BY MARK GUY PEARSE.

Let us turn again to the little company of men and women into whose hands has been put this great work of restoring the kingdoms of this world to Christ. We cannot pretend for a moment that the conditions which have been suggested as essential to such a work, would be the only conditions named—not even the first. There are needs very much less lofty and very much less spiritual than would occur to most of us if we were enthused with a work so vast and so far-reaching. The first thought of our practical nineteenth century would be this: we shall want a great deal of money.

And if we were as poor as that little company of men and women to whom Christ spoke, what consternation and desire would come upon us as to the money! Where can it come from? If we open a subscription list we might get Joseph of Arimathea to head it, but as for us, we can do nothing.

"We shall want a great deal of money"—what a familiar phrase. How natural it seems and how necessary. We measure our possibilities for the world's conversion by our money. It is the sum of our wants. The cry of the Church is, Give, give, give; and the dream of the zealous is, what wonders we could do if we only had the money.

Now let us ask ourselves earnestly, why is it that in the beginning of this great work not a single word about money was ever spoken, either by the Master or the disciples? If money is essential to this work, why did not Jesus Christ secure it for Himself when He went forth; and in turn secure a vast endowment for His disciples at the commencement of their work? Did He not know how much of the energy, and heart, and time of the Church would be taken up in raising the necessary funds? Did He not know that the Church would be crippled and hampered, and her work sometimes actually given up for the want of money? And yet He does not say one word about it. And when a

very rich man came to Him one day, He quietly bid him go and get shut of his money and then come and follow Him. What does it mean?

There is a vague impression that in those days of intense spirituality and sweet simplicity, they somehow managed to get along without money. If that be so, then in the name of the Lord Jesus, let us strive to get back again such a blessed condition. But, of course, they needed money as much as we do, and had a great deal less of it; how is it, then, that the early Church does not seem to have felt the need of that which is the extreme requisite of the Church to-day? Christianity, as we see it in the New Testament, has no more to do with tithes than with incense or ephods. Jesus Christ gave no commandment or promise concerning money, except, indeed, that He told His disciples to provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in their purse.

"But we must have money of course," says everybody, as if that ended all question, and as if everything must start still until the money is given. Faith, heroism, enterprise for the Lord Jesus, are all to be suppressed until the tithes are in the storehouse; then go forth and be as heroic as you please, only be careful not to step beyond the funds in hand. It is, of course, very easy to sneer at all this as sentiment and sublime theory; that is a very little matter. The question is, did the Lord Jesus Christ intend the success of the Church to depend in any degree upon money?

"Ye shall receive power after the Holy Ghost is come upon you." Is this condition dependent, in the slightest degree, upon the income of the Church? And yet we all declare, we must have money. Do we really mean to assert that we believe in a system designed for the conquest of the whole world, and believe that its great Founder and Head has all power in heaven and in earth, and yet that His Church is perpetually on the point of failure for want of money? If we must have money; if money is essential to the triumph of Christianity, let us have the confidence to go to God and ask for it, and let us have the assurance that it will be given.