

GENERAL MISSIONS THE CHURCH'S FIRST DUTY.

LAST summer it was my privilege to attend the Lambeth Conference. Objective facts have a peculiar power in bringing the truths of life home to the mind and enabling us to realize them—that is, to feel their reality definitely. Such a realization regarding the present growth and future destiny of the Anglican Communion came with this gathering of Bishops from England and America, from Africa and Asia, from Australia and the islands of the sea. And it was an experience never to be forgotten, simply to become familiar with the faces and voices of leaders who are doing God's work in all parts of the world, from the snow fields of Alaska to the jungles of Africa. . . .

The spiritual climax of the conference was not reached until the day before the final adjournment. When we came to that part of the encyclical which related to Foreign Missions, and when, in answer to some objections regarding overstatement, the Archbishop of Canterbury spoke out his deep convictions regarding this subject, his words rang out like an echo of New Testament times. When, in clarion tones, he proclaimed that, in his judgment, the primary commission of Christ to His Church was, "*Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to the whole creation*" (Revised Version); that our own Church, notwithstanding all she had done in the past, through her Foreign and Domestic missionary societies, had not, as yet, begun to discharge the responsibility that the Lord had laid upon her, and that she was still far below the level of New Testament energy, it became evident at once that he had expressed the dominant thought in every breast.

The experiences of that hour were bewildering in their fullness. It was as though a sudden flash of light had come revealing the thoughts of all hearts. It was nothing less than a revelation of the supreme aim of the whole Anglican Communion: and in the glow of the moment, Bishops from different parts of the world arose and said that if they had come from their far distant dioceses for nothing else, the inspiration of this one afternoon would repay them for their journey to Lambeth. . . .

As the Archbishop of Canterbury truly said, the Church of to-day has not begun to rise to the responsibility that our Risen Lord laid upon her before He left this earth. If this is true of the English and Colonial Churches, it is no less true of the American.

Here in the United States, we have devoted ourselves to the development of parochial life, and have far outstripped the Christian bodies around us in making those parish churches whose spires rise above our towns and villages

real spiritual homes of the people; but that which was once a right discernment of the times and a true aim, is now in danger of passing into an exaggeration. We have gradually glided into a one-sided way of thinking in which the right proportion of things has been lost. We have gradually grown more and more deaf to the voice which rings through the ages: "*Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to the whole creation.*"

Read the statistics put forth by the late revered Dr. Langford regarding the hundreds, yes, thousands, of parishes of our own American Church of these United States which contribute absolutely nothing to the work of the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society, and you will find there an appalling proof how largely this spirit of parochial selfishness pervades our Church.

Then come back to the warning of the Head of the Church: "*He that findeth his life shall lose it.*" The selfish motive always defeats itself and writes its own death warrant. No parish can expect to grow and prosper which has no thought of the great world beyond its own border. It may unselfishly uplift those of the immediate neighborhood who are beneath its own level; but the spiritual life of its inner circle of communicants is paralyzed and dying at the top. . . .

The spread of Christ's Kingdom on earth does not depend upon money, it depends upon free-will offerings. "The gift without the giver is bare." The one thing needful is to inspire people to give as God has given to them. Go back to our Lord's first missionary charge, and you will find in it the strongest emphasis laid upon self-sacrifice, self-denial for Christ's sake, the necessity of entire self-consecration to His service, but no reference to the need of material support. We are told, indeed, that the laborer is worthy of his hire; but the Apostles are sent forth without purse or scrip or change of raiment to teach them, and all the Christian ages after them, that the whole dependence of the Church is to be upon Christ Himself.

Then, read the history of the New Testament Church as it is given in the Acts and Epistles of the Apostles. In no subsequent period has the growth of the Church been so great, the missionary spirit so intense, the multiplication of congregations so rapid, as in those first thirty years after the Ascension. The reason is obvious—the power of Church workers, in that day, lay in the fact that they were ceaselessly looking up to their reigning King, who had proclaimed "All power is given to Me in Heaven and on earth," and then, gave themselves up, with a complete self-surrender, to His service. . . .

For us in America the cause of missions