

The Duty of Giving the Gospel to the World.

The Annual Convention Sermon preached at Moncton, August 25, 1901. By Rev. John Clark, M. A.

"Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." Mark 16:15. "Let him that heareth say, Come." Revelation 22:17.

A survey of the world in general by a devout Christian must be attended with deep and varied feelings. There will surely be thankfulness that so much has been done for the cause of Christ; so much devotion shown; so much sacrifice made; so many agents and agencies employed; so many barriers between native and nation thrown down; so many dangers and difficulties overcome; so many schools supported; so many tribes reached; so many Bibles circulated; so many congregations gathered; so many churches established; and, above all, so many souls converted to Jesus Christ. All this is a matter for thankfulness and joy.

And there will be a degree of hope—hope in the increasing liberality; in the persevering efforts, and in the prevailing supplications of the Lord's servants; hope in the exceeding great and precious promises of the Divine Word; hope in the Holy Spirit's prevailing power; hope, cheering and true, in the ultimate triumph of the cause of Christ.

And there will be a feeling of sadness. The superficiality that passes under the name of religion; the endless debates and divisions about points of doctrines and plans of work; the blank opposition of some, and the stolid indifference of others; the weakness of the few, and the worldliness of the many; the comparative smallness of the fields already cultivated, and the vastness of the regions remaining a moral and spiritual wilderness, cannot fail to awaken emotions of sadness, pity and regret.

And will not another feeling arise—an intensely eager longing that greater numbers might be saved?—might be brought out of darkness into the light of gospel day? And surely this eager longing, in proportion to its sincerity, will struggle for expression in necessary prayer, enlarged beneficence, and nobler Christian life.

There is likely, also, to grow upon the Christian a solemn sense of obligation while continuing this thoughtful survey of the great, vast world of eternity-tending human souls, among whom, in his own consciousness, in the reckoning of his fellow creatures, and above all, in the sight of Almighty God, he counts as one; responsible to himself, responsible to man, and responsible to God for the greatest of all trusts next to his own existence—the gospel of Christ, brought home to his attention, laid upon his heart, wrought into his memory, accessible to his eye, and perpetually sounding its message in his ears.

The Christian has abundant reason to prize the gospel. It is the food of his soul; the balm of his sorrows; the charter of his liberty; the pledge of his redemption; the guide of his footsteps; the music of his marchings; the staff of his pilgrimage; the light of his pathway; the foundation of his hope; the subject of his thought; the burden of his song; the strength of his heart; the crown of his knowledge; the glory of his intellect; the object of his affection; and the never-failing source of his happiness and joy.

All that the gospel is to himself, it is capable of being to every human soul on the face of the earth. It can stand all possible tests. Its source is the heart of God, and its home is the heart of man. It had its origin in the old eternity, and will awaken adoring wonder through the ages yet to be. It comes from the highest heaven, and it saves from the lowest hell. Its beauty is fairer than the dawn; its light is clearer than the sun's; its power is mightier than a parliament's; its triumphs are grander than a Caesar's; its gifts are nobler than a king's; its fragments are richer than monarch's feasts; its foundations are firmer than the mountains; its peace is more secure than an empire's; its dominion is vaster than the continents; its life-time longer than the centuries; and its music sweeter than a seraph's song. It has the eternal God for its author; the glorious Redeemer for its subject; the Spirit of Jehovah as its interpreter; ten thousand times ten thousand saved and regenerated souls as its advocates; yes, thousands of thousands, added to thousands of thousands of glorified spirits around God's throne as the imperishable trophies of its power. A gospel like this needs no specialist to apologize for its existence, and no experimentalist to adapt it to the fancies of the hour. The masterpiece of the eternal God, it can receive no improvement at the hand of mortal man.

A gospel that was breathed by divine lips into the ears of our first parents in Eden, was the hope of patriarchs and prophets through long generations, was the burden of angelic messages to man, was the theme of God's dear son throughout his public ministry, was sealed by his blood on Calvary's awful cross, was ratified by the All-Holy One when he raised his Son from the dead and gave him glory, was preached by inspired apostles with soul-saving, city-moving, God-glorifying power, demands that we should give it to the world.

The gospel is Divine. It is not of man. Not one sentence thereof, not one syllable thereof, was suggested

by mortal's lips, or indited by mortal's pen. It must be preached as it came from God. Teachers may not vary it; missionaries may not modify it; synods may not shape it; councils may not cancel it; churches may not change it; creeds may not encumber it; traditions may not trammel it; science may not color it; philosophies may not supplement it; princes may not tamper with it; reformers may not repudiate it; apostles may not abrogate it; or even angels announce another gospel in its place. Yes, though man or angel preach any other gospel, the anathema sounds forth: "Let him be accursed."

The gospel stands without compeer—sovereign, sublime, alone. There is only one gospel for the whole world. There is only one gospel for the age—this, or any other; and no other gospel does any age require. It has been sufficient in the past; it is sufficient for the present; it will be sufficient for the future. It is God's message of mercy; God's mandate of grace; God's token of love; God's vow of promise; God's voice of entreaty; God's kiss of endearment; God's welcoming bosom of rest. All this the gospel is, and more. It is the utterance of the Almighty's deepest thoughts, and the fullest revelation of his love to fallen man. It is a great, grand gospel for the great, wide world. Its glory has never waned. All that it was, it is. It was mighty in ancient times; it is mighty still. Through all the history of the past its path has been one of light, and its ministry full of blessing. It has come, at last, to us; giving us rest from our sorrow, and from our fear, and from the hard bondage wherein we were made to serve. It is placed in our charge for us to dispense. "As every one hath received the gift, so minister the same one to another as stewards of the manifold grace of God." The gospel is not ours to hoard, as a miser hoards his gold; but ours to share with those who have it not. It is ours in trust for the good of the human race, and in giving it to the world we are one in lofty purpose with God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost.

The gospel was given to us. We did not earn it by our labors; nor did we win it by our worth. The unevangelized, missionless millions in heathen lands are as worthy of, and as much entitled to, the gospel as any of us in this house today. God gave it to us, that we might give it to them. Why don't we give it? If we hold the gospel back by locking it up in lips of silence, or by withholding the means which should send its heralds forth, we are unjust stewards in the sight of God. "What hast thou that thou didst not receive?" "A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven." Inspired by gratitude to God, we should shrink at no sacrifice he calls on us to make, nor hesitate at any labor he asks us to perform, in order that the gospel may accomplish all his will. A prompt, spontaneous, wide-spread effort among the various churches, and among their individual membership, would speedily evangelize the nations. "Freely ye have received, freely give." To us is given the bread of life to meet the hunger of earth's teeming millions, and the balm of Gilead for the healing of the nations. What if any should rise up against us in the judgment and say: "You had the lamp of truth, but you never held it forth that I might see my perilous condition, and the only path of escape! You knew the fountain of life, but you never brought me a cup of cold water to quench my raging thirst. You handled the bread of life, but you never gave me a crumb to stave off the hunger which gnawed, like a vulture, at my soul! I, your fellow man, bone of your bone, flesh of your flesh, and soul of your soul, was hungering, famishing, perishing with this reach of your benevolence, and you, who had abundance, you who boasted of your religion, gave me, your fellow man, no bread! O God of heaven! O righteous Judge Eternal! that man—that woman—gave me no bread!"

"The liberal soul shall be made fat; and he that withholdeth corn the people shall curse him; but blessings shall be on the head of him that selleth it." "Let him that heareth, say come." This may be reckoned among the certain things of the kingdom: God has given the gospel to his people in order that they might give it to the world.

We need the gospel ourselves. It is the greatest of all our needs. We need its strength to make us strong; its goodness to make us good; its gladness to make us glad; its wisdom to make us wise; its security to make us safe; its purity to make us pure; and its spirit to make us spiritual. Until it enters the heart, we are adrift on a wild tempestuous sea, without an anchor, without a compass, without a chart, and without the majestic presence of the Galleon Christ whose voice alone can hush the winds and waves to rest.

We have received the gospel by faith. It has saved our souls from death and deepest doom. It brings us grace for the life which now is, and assures us of glory in that which is to come. We can never exhaust its fulness, for its resources are as infinite as Deity. We may walk in its light, rejoice in its consolations, depend on its support, and, while cherishing it in our affection, become the happy medium of imparting it to those whose needs are as deep and as great as our own. Beneficiaries of the gospel, we can afford to be munificent. By giving

the gospel to the perishing we may make them eternally rich. And, oh, what a joy it will be to meet in our Father's House those who have been brought to Christ directly or indirectly through our instrumentality! Will that rapturous joy be yours and mine?

We must give the gospel to the world, now. It never needed it more. Its sores are festering; its wounds are corrupting; its symptoms are alarming; its shadows are darkening; its woes are gathering thick and fast. Souls around us, and millions upon millions throughout the world, are in direst need of the gospel; and the brittle thread of life on which so much depends may soon be snapped. Thousands are passing daily to their dread and last account. Alas! how many go without the gospel.

While to you the passing years
More and more endear it,
Millions of the human race
Die and never hear it.

At every breath we draw four souls pass into eternity, never having heard of Christ. Think, for a moment, of India. One-sixth of the world's population is there—three hundred millions of human souls. We fail to comprehend how much those figures mean. Three hundred million human beings! and only about one million of these are professedly Protestant Christians. The children of that country walking four abreast and two feet apart would make a procession 5,000 miles long. Out of every six births into the world, one is there; a birth into ignorance and unbelief. Out of every six deaths in the world, one is there; a death uncheered by gospel hope. O India! thou land of mighty wonders; thou land of blighting woes. Thou shalt know a mightier wonder yet—

"The wondrous cross
On which the Prince of Glory died."

For thy woes there is a remedy—one, only one—the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Our own beloved missionaries have gone to that far-off land to tell the story of redeeming grace. The divine blessing has rested upon their labors. Their consecrated ardor has been an inspiration to the churches at home. But death has claimed its victims, (can we forget the distant, lonely graves?) and the trying effects of the climate have interrupted useful toil. But the work must go on. Vacant places must be filled; new laborers must go forth, and new fields of service must be entered. Surely, there are consecrated souls in these provinces who hear "the voice of the Lord saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" and with lips touched with fire from off the altar, are ready to reply: "Lord, here am I send me."

Through the missionaries already on the field, and others like-minded whom the churches at home are abundantly able to support;—missionaries who know the gospel as we know it—love the gospel as we love it—speak the gospel as we speak it,—who shall say how much more might be done, and early done to give the gospel to the world?

Yes, the gospel must be given to all mankind. No people, whether near at hand or far away, must be left without it. It is a gospel needed in life; a gospel needed in death.

Nought like this can cheer and bless
Sinful, dying mortals;
Nought like this can gild with light
Death's dark, gloomy portals.

It is the best thing we have to give. "The gold and the crystal cannot equal it: and the exchange of it shall not be for jewels of fine gold." There is no speech nor language that can utter all its worth, and under the broad heavens there is nought that can take its place. It is the best gift that God has given to man, and the best gift that man can give to man.

All should give it. Not one soul that has it truly—has it in the grasp of its faith—has it in the hold of its love—can wish to keep it back. It was given to be given. Each can give it to some one else; to another, and yet another. The world's evangelization does not devolve upon ministers and missionaries alone. When Andrew finds the Messiah, he tells his brother Simon, and brings him at once to Jesus. And when Philip finds the Saviour he immediately tells his brother Nathanael, and soon Nathanael adoringly exclaims: "Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the king of Israel." And thus, Christians, individually, must do their part in giving the gospel to the world. If all had the zeal of the first disciples, how fast the tidings would spread! how far the gospel would go! and how great would its triumphs be!

Give the gospel at home. It must have a large place there. It is the home gospel; such as parents and children alike are saved by; such as every household in our own land, and all other lands, should welcome with delight. While sending the gospel abroad, we must give the gospel at home. "It is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." Take gospel light and love into every earthly home, and let every saved soul become a home missionary; a means of blessing at home; a light shining at home; a witness for Christ at home. "Go home to thy friends and tell them the great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee." Proclaim the good news at home,