

same literalism further and place our Lord in the absurd position of bidding us also to "*baptize the nations!*" There are some who think that this word does not refer to the first stage—preaching the gospel,—but to the second, training disciples; and that our Lord is here commissioning his church to gather converts from all peoples, and then baptize and fully instruct them. However this be, if we look at the four Gospels jointly, we shall see that one thought is uppermost; we are to go into all the world and everywhere publish the tidings. If Matthew's words leave us in doubt, Mark, Luke, and John dispel it. As they report Christ's words, they are unequivocal. "Go!"—"proclaim the gospel"—"Repentance and remission of sins" to be "proclaimed in His name among all nations." "Even so send I you." "These things are written that ye might believe"—"and believing have life through His name." And in the opening of the Acts, Luke adds a fifth version: "Ye shall be witnesses unto me, unto the uttermost parts of the earth."

We often carelessly say that the church is commissioned "to convert the world." The phrase is not scriptural, and we fear it is at least misleading. We may insure *contact*, but we cannot assure *conversion*; and if we are powerless to effect it, we are not responsible for it. The use of this word, convert, and its equivalents in the Bible, is very significant. Often as it occurs it is generally used passively or intransitively. "Shall *be* converted,"\* "lest they convert" †—or turn, etc. In Acts xxvi: 18, a proper grammatical construction compels us to render intransitively, "that *they may turn about*," etc. James uses the word transitively, ‡ but he refers to the *reclamation of erring disciples*; "brethren if *any of you* do err from the truth and one convert him," etc. And the change of voice is especially noticeable in Psalm li: 13.

"Then will I teach transgressors thy ways;  
And sinners shall be converted unto thee."

Here the very distinction is preserved which we would emphasize: we may teach transgressors, but we cannot convert them. Of course conversions have followed and will follow the proclamation of the gospel; but not even the most devoted herald can assure them. We are thus careful to lay down the platform of principles upon which we are to carry on the work of evangelization, because we dare not add to, or subtract from, the exact terms of our divine mission and commission. This is no case of a distinction without a difference. On the contrary, we are persuaded that *upon our thorough acceptance of this Biblical basis hangs the proper prosecution of the whole work of evangelization*. And therefore we now proceed to show *seven vital relations* which such a conception of evangelism bears to the believer's work for souls.

\* Psalm li: 13. † Isaiah vi: 10. ‡ James v: 19, 20.