

Mission Field.

THE CHURCH OF THE SECOND ADVENT.

[From a Sermon by Rev. H. Richards, in S. P. G. Mission Field].

A great responsibility lies upon the English Church, and therefore upon each of its members—a greater responsibility probably than upon any other branch of the Church or body of Christians—to fulfil the Great Commission, and so directly prepare the world for the Second Advent. It is not upon the British State as a State; not so much even on the people of this country as a people, but rather upon the English Church, as a church, a society enjoying special privileges—spiritual privileges, and therefore charged with special responsibilities—spiritual responsibilities.

And observe that Christ declares that the Gospel shall be preached in all the world, in some way or form: let the English Church, which claims to possess it in the purest form, see that, so far as in her lies, it is her form of the truth which is put before the nations. Dissent and Romanism are working on each side of her in the Mission field; is either a Bible without a Church or a Church without a Bible likely to appeal to the heathen with the same Divine force and converting power as the two presented in combination? We are sometimes told that we should rejoice to see good work done, whoever does it. I would rather say we should consider it a disgrace to ourselves to see the work being done so much worse than we ourselves might have done it, and ought to have done it.

And what, in a few words, is the work as indicated in our text in reference to the second Advent of our Lord—the great event for which it is to be regarded as a preparation?

It is, firstly, to go forth into all the world; to leave no soil untilled, no corner unvisited, no race, however low, however benighted, unapproached; and this is possible now. And to do this with the object, not of exciting travels and adventures, not of writing books or making money, or bringing home interesting specimens, whether of nature or humanity; but of setting forth Christianity as the only true religion, the only hope of the world: to show and confess to all the nations (what is the absolute truth) that all that is good in our modern civilization has come from Christianity, and that all that is evil in it has come from the devil, and will do them, as it has done us, infinite harm if they only admit it. It is not the function of the British State or the British people to do this; we may as well admit it, for they certainly are not doing it; but it is the function, the grand call, the sacred duty of the English Church, and may God give her grace to perform it!

And notice that the way to do this is not to begin by founding an organisation without any inner life, by baptizing heathens wholesale; nor on the other hand to think of nothing

but "conversion;" but it is to witness faithfully and fully to Christ and His religion, by preaching, by teaching, by living, by praying, to sow the seed; God will make it grow. Yet must it not be forgotten that it is the Gospel of the Kingdom which is to be preached, that is, the Gospel of the Church of Christ, not the Gospel of individualism or congregationalism; that the Bride of Christ is fruitful still, and can bring forth churches in all lands, as well as send forth her sons to plant the Cross.

"And then shall the end come." He has said it, and He will perform it; then, and not till then, when the Church has repented her of her sins, and faithfully borne her witness to all nations, sealing it if need be with the blood of her martyrs, even in these latter days. "Then shall the end come;" then shall the earth be filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea; then shall our eyes behold the King in His beauty; then shall the kingdoms of the earth become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall be King of Kings and Lord of Lords, and reign for ever and ever. "Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

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