

## CHRISTIAN MISSIONS.

"And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." Luke 24:47.

If Christian people worked as hard, and with as much faith, to establish the teaching of Jesus Christ as the communists do to establish the philosophy of Carl Marx Christ's hope of a Christian world might soon be realized. There is no way of life ever offered to men that brought half the benefits to those who embraced it as Christianity has. There is no religion that has brought such riches, happiness, and security to its converts as the religion of the lowly Nazarene. There has never been an individual, a tribe, or a nation that accepted Christianity in sincerity and truth that was not made richer, happier, and more secure even in this life by its teachings. From the poor drunkard, whose family is raised from rags and poverty to respectable plenty, to the barbarious Angles and Saxons, who were raised from barbarism to the highest civilization ever known, every people who have accepted this way of life have been blessed a hundred fold. Then can some one tell us why Christians are so slow to share these benefits with others?

In one of the counties of the State of Georgia there was a county officer who was a member of the Primitive Baptist Church. He was a man of sterling character, and held the confidence of all his neighbors regardless of church affiliations. One day a group of friends from the

Missionary Baptist Church visited him, to persuade him to join their church. They told him that he was too broad-minded and progressive to belong to a church that opposed missions. He listened to their proposal with an open mind, but after they had finished he asked them some pointed questions about the missionary program of their church. The answer to these questions brought out the amount each Georgia Baptist had contributed to the cause of missions the past year. With a twinkle in his eye the old man pulled out fifteen cents and said he believed he would join if that was all it cost. The actual figures will show that Georgia Methodists and other missionary minded Christians did but little better.

With a world groping in darkness and sin we have only fifteen cents each to save it. This is not the spirit of Christ. He was the greatest missionary that ever lived. He believed in the truth He came to teach so much that no price was too great that men might know it. When He looked on the harvest fields of the world His great soul was moved with a mighty passion that they might be brought to a better way of life. Nor did He stop with merely hoping for these things. How the great giving heart of Jesus must be grieved at what we are willing to give to save a world. As He looks on those who shared so richly in what He gave, we can almost hear Him say, "And is this all my gospel is worth to you? Truly, it cost me far more than that."

The question has been raised, even in Christian

lands, Is Christianity suited to all races of men? Some have gone so far as to say that some races would be better off without Christianity. We know that Christ believed it was suited to all races. How many times He told His disciples that this gospel must be preached to every race of men. We know that Paul believed it was for all men. These are the two greatest expositors of the Christian religion, and no man can honestly say that they did not believe Christianity was the heritage of all mankind. We have found some races and tribes who refused to accept it. But every one of these, so far, have failed to hold their own in the march of humanity. We have other races who have accepted Christianity only in name. When the war-like tribes of Germany accepted Christianity they refused to have their right arms baptized, signifying by this omission that they intended to continue to use these members in defiance of the teachings of Christ. Barbarians that they were, they knew that the teachings of Christ condemned their way of life. We have many individuals who accept Christianity in this way. So many people who have joined the church have only had their heads wet. Their hands, their feet, and their hearts are still unbaptized. Sam Jones said not very many tongues had been baptized. But no people has ever accepted this way of life in sincerity and truth that were not made infinitely richer and happier by it. Until they do we will continue to believe, as He did, that this way of life is best for all men.

One of the reasons why the spread of Christianity has been so slow is the difficulty of persuading men and women to undertake such a radical change in their lives. No other religion has ever dared to propose such a radical change in the thought, purpose, and acts of human life. From the most secret thought to the boldest act it cries, "Repent, and turn from these things." It is a right-about-face religion. Sam Jones homely phrase, "Quit your meanness," has, in different forms, been always the battle cry of the Christian religion.

Many religions have some material advantage to offer their converts. Some religions make their appeal to men by promising to satisfy some baser passion of the human heart. Christians cannot do either. We can neither promise to satisfy man's lust or greed. Even if the baser passions of the human heart were innocent no honest man could promise to satisfy them. A religion that promises satisfaction for any baser passion is promising an impossibility. They can not be satisfied. They go on growing stronger and stronger till they destroy the man that gives them rein. But the baser passions of the heart are not innocent. They can only be fed by preying on those who are weaker. We know that the only hope for men is to have these passions destroyed and holier ones to take their place. This the sublime faith of Christianity undertakes to do. But it is a stupendous task.

One of the fastest growing religions in the world today is communism. It makes its strongest appeal to the down trodden and oppressed. It promises all men a fair share in the material things of life. If the philosophy of Carl Marx could deliver all the benefits it promises to men it would indeed be a noble religion. But it cannot do it. Until all men are equal mentally and physically nothing but a great love can assure all unequal share in the material things of life. If all men were endowed with equal strength physically and mentally, and all applied themselves with equal diligence to material ends, it is doubtful if all would share alike in the material things of life. The accidents and hazards of life are too many and varied for all men to have the same fortune. But with unequal endowments nothing short of a great love for our neighbor will insure all men a fair share in the blessings of life. For this glorious day Christianity hopes as ardently as communism ever has. But here the communists have the advantage over us. As ambassadors of Christ we dare not promise more than we can give. Our Lord was very careful not to do this. When one came running to Him, and said, "Good Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest," Jesus saw that he was expecting some great advantage from his connection with the Master. It was easy to think that a man with such gifts, power, and popularity as Christ had both riches and honor to give His friends. Out of His great honest heart He discouraged

any such hopes. He gave him this solemn warning, "The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head."

Christianity does bring material benefits to those who embrace it. It has made whole nations rich. A French ambassador once asked Queen Victoria to give him a reason for the superior wealth and security of the English people. The great woman handed him the Bible. But material wealth does not come as a direct benefit to those who embrace Christianity. Such blessings come as an indirect reward for the superior thrift and industry of Christian people. We can promise neither riches or worldly honors to those who embrace our religion. All we can offer is a cross. We know it brings untold wealth and happiness to all who will embrace it, but it is hard to convince a selfish world that this is so. To them it seems a hard and heavy cross.

Before we can win men to this way we must persuade them to surrender their wills to Another. Even Christ had to do this. It is hard for a man to surrender his will to another. If you would know how hard it is for men to surrender their wills go look on the wrecks of humanity. Our prisons, our alms houses, and our slums are full of men and women who chose to live as they pleased. All this degradation and ruin have they chosen rather than surrender their wills. But there is no other way into the Christian life. A will surrendered to God is the very foundation of a Christian life.

If we could blow on our hands and save men, if we could repeat some magical formula and turn them from death to life, if we could teach them some creed that would regenerate their lives, if we could purify their hearts with some baptismal rite, we would do it. If we could take the punishment for other people's sins and save them some of us would even do that. But when God says the hearts of these sinners must be changed, knowing from bitter experience the chains that bind them, it staggers human faith. When Exekiel stood over the valley of dry bones, and the spirit of God said, "Son of man, can these bones live?" He answered, "O Lord God, thou knowest." He did not say it could not be done, but a grave doubt is implied in the answer. When the Christian looks on a world in sin and darkness, and the spirit of Christ says, "Son, can these sinners live?" he answers, "O Lord God, thou knowest." But it is just such a faith that God requires in men who would win the world to Him.