

The National Mission and Missions.

CHRIST AS LORD IN NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL LIFE.

TWO utterances from two different sources may help to introduce this far-reaching subject, and may illustrate the fact that Christ Jesus, both by the Church and with deepening persuasion by the world, is regarded as the one hope of the age. The Bishop of Winchester, in a recent sermon on foreign missions, spoke thus: "For all the nations, and not least for our own, we have to ask what is the great opposing force which can hold the field against evil, enduring it, resisting it, overcoming it. There is no answer but one; that force is the Kingdom of God upon earth. For we live in spacious times, and must think not only in continents, as it has been said, but we must think world-wide thoughts of world-issues. The Kingdom is one for all the kingdoms and peoples."

We may notice later yet farther-reaching thoughts, even to the utmost bounds of the everlasting hills, in the spacious times of the ages to come. But in strange corroboration of the Bishop's view of the Kingdom, I notice this late utterance of Mr. Bernard Shaw: "There is no way out of anarchy except through Christian principles. Shall we at last make up our own minds to have a Christian aim in all things, and so to take Christ seriously at last?"—not only in our homes, he would seem to say, but in our parliaments and in our workshops. To take Christ seriously, in Mr. Shaw's utterance, would, I presume, mean to him to accept Christ's precepts of self-sacrificing and equalizing and subordinating charity as controlling corporate life as well as individual life. This is something different from that serious view which must be ours, namely, the Christian faith in the Person and prerogatives of Jesus Christ which alone gives the sanction of conscience, and constrains the loyal response of obedience to His precepts and principles and to His supreme sovereignty.

"Art Thou a King then? Thou sayest that I am a King." Yes, Lord, we hail Thee with the ten thousand times ten thousand voices of heaven, and the thunder of the acclaim of all creation. The Head that once was crowned with thorns is crowned with glory

now. And that glory is only the confirmation of the glory Thou hadst with the Father and the eternal Spirit before the world was. In the unity of the Trinity of the Godhead Thou art the blessed and only Potentate, King of kings, Lord of lords, on that everlasting throne, eternal, immortal, incorruptible, invisible, the only God. King as *Creator* ; in the beginning Thou wast, all things were made by Thee. King as *Preserver* and Fountain of all life ; before all things and all things consisting, upheld and controlled by Thee ; time, eternity, matter and spiritual being by Thine everlasting arms enfolded and by Thee sustained. King as *Redeemer and Saviour* ; neither is there salvation in any other. He is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world. He is the divine Reconciler to the holy and most righteous God of all creation, distressed and shaken from its allegiance and faultless order by the tremor and earthquake of moral evil. He is *Lord of All*. Therefore, this call of loyalty to the King is meet, right, and the necessary duty of all individuals and tribes and nations and kingdoms, and of things in the heavens and things on the earth, and in His name every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that He is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

I pause for a moment to notice how a lower view of the King alone can tolerate that misconception which has come over some minds with regard to comparative religion, to wit, that Christianity may learn perchance much, certainly somewhat, from other faiths, and that we must look for a mosaic of faith in the final and universal religion, as well as a mosaic of nationalities in the City of God. How do they coalesce then, on the supposition that they are all parts of the Divine Revelation ? if, for instance, we still insist on the Divine Sonship and supreme sovereignty of the Lord Christ, and are advised to welcome Islam alongside, whose own Koran declares this claim and prerogative of the Lord to be a crime for the assertion of which He Himself will be judged at the last day ? How, further, with the promise and gift of God before us, eternal life which is in Christ Jesus our Lord, and He the very fountain and well of life, can we admit the faith of Buddhism to a place on Christianity's left side—Buddhism which teaches in its original that the love of life is the veriest mistaken folly, and that the cessation of all sensation is the goal of man, and the satisfaction of the hopes that man has so passionately held ? This view of Comparative Religion

cannot be sustained, and this consideration must largely govern our loyal service in Christian missions.

Further than this, loyalty to Christ as the supreme Sovereign over the souls and bodies and minds and faith of men turns a deaf ear to hints and suggestions as to supplementary additions to the body of truth—the truth, I mean, which is the complete revelation of God in the Person of His Son, that full revelation of prophecy and symbol and doctrine and worship contained and expressed in the Scriptures of truth, our Lord's own Bible written by men carried along by the *afflatus* of the Spirit of truth.

Watch now this principle at work. National life is not that of a conglomerate mass, an impersonal institution. It is made up of individual lives. I begin therefore this answer to the call of God to the nations in myself, in what the Chinese call the microcosm, the little heaven and earth of my own being, and then work outwards in far-reaching thought and desire and resolve, if not in active world-wide enterprise. An imperial passion and atmosphere must govern my heart and life, and my conception of all things and beings in the heavens and on the earth. Put down, O Lord, all rule and authority and power, and every high thing and every low thing which exalts itself in treasonable plot or outbreak of insurrection against the holy will and supreme sovereignty of Christ and of God in my heart and life. No conscientious objector must tarry in my sight; no talking of Thee, Lord Jesus, by the walls and the doors of the houses, whispering or asserting doubts as to the veracity and historicity and plenary inspiration of the King's own Scriptures of truth; no suspicion that the King come from God to teach (observe) as well as to save, was swayed by ignorant environment, which ignorance He was daily exposing and correcting. For all such thoughts may be veiled treason. My heart, further, shall not be swayed by thoughts or affections or plans, as though I was ever off duty for a time, with relaxation of loyalty, the Lord not before me and the King not near me; giving thus chance and invitation to the world, the flesh and the devil to come in, not as guests indeed, but perhaps too uncharitably suspected as spies and traitors, whom it may interest us to know a little about. Resist such, rather, at the very doors of your heart. Let there be no vacant seat or unoccupied corner for sin, which is high treason against the King. Rather give all the room, by the divine Spirit's

cheering and illuminating grace, to the supreme love of God which hates evil, and the deep love of man, as deep or deeper than the highest love of self. That highest love of what is so precious and lovable that Christ died to save this treasure—myself, hates sin in myself, and so loves my neighbour as to hate to see sin in my neighbour.

Now with this imperial spirit in my own heart and life by God's grace, namely, the vow and the desire that Christ shall dominate and control the whole life of the nation and of myself, I cannot rest until I know that as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord. My wife, if I have that high prize, is fellow-heir with me of the grace of life, and fellow-worker in unfaltering loyalty to the Kingdom of God. My children, God's heritage and gift, laid at once in the very arms of the King, the Lord my Shepherd, for His gift of spiritual regeneration, "Ask and ye shall have," must stay there through the grace of the Holy Ghost, and no example of mine nor neglect of mine in nurture and admonition, must ever suggest or tolerate disloyalty to the King. Here is a case, indeed, where the compulsion of the spiritual nature cannot be effected by any form of physical discipline, but it is a case like the whole case before us now, where the power of love to God, loyalty to the King, and love for my child's eternal future, must make prayer and faith in God's promises almost ignore the possibility of neutrality or intrigue or rebellion or callousness towards Christ the Lord in my children. I cannot afford to treat the follies and carelessness of childhood or the sins of youth or the phase of scepticism or agnosticism, which some think inevitable in young people, as a little thing, but as incipient though unconscious treason. Neither can I admit that the choice of a profession or the choice of religion must be left chiefly to the young people's own conscience and preference, unless I have first warned them, and with tears, that a life lived without Christ ruins life which is life indeed: such must be the life of an enemy alien or at best the life of a suspect, for my children are all bound and promised to God and accepted by Him. Further, I must tell them that though all the King's subjects are not for service at the front, they also serve who only stand and wait on the King and on the King's servants anywhere as need may call, yet the refusal to go to the front if called, the refusal to esteem that as the noblest position, the refusal to say not, "Why should I go?" but rather,

“Why should I not go?” is not to pledge in deepest spiritual Christian loyalty the King and the Church. So with myself and my commonwealth of the family, and this including my servants if I have any such kind and loyal helpers, I cannot rest until I have done all in my power, by prayer, by the Word of God, and by example, to lead each one to welcome Christ into his life and heart. Thus loyal, I watch in hope and prayer, and in effect, this ideal of Christ in national and international life spreading and expanding.

Come outside the door for a moment, and see what a fresh outbreak of wonder and lament, and joy and of shame, comes over the places where my life and the life of the nations and of all things are spent. All belong to the King, and with no pantheistic fancy, but with the vision of faith which is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen, I watch the immanence of God, and see my Sovereign's broad arrow, glory and beauty, and His very pierced Hand, on all His glorious works in sky and sea and land. There comes then a splendour on the grass, a glory in the flowers which crosses not even childhood's waking dreams or nature-lover's rapturous gaze, if the vision of the Lord and Maker of all is hidden. Then the first snowdrop of the year, and the yellow primrose, and the dancing daffodils, delight with tenderest, freshest beauty these northern latitudes. So in glory blazes the flame of the forest in equator lands, and the thousand miles of azalea-carpeted hills in China, and rhododendrons wreathing and clothing the slopes of the mighty Himalayan mountains, and the gorgeous foliage of Malaysia and the Southern Seas, and the mystery of the dawn high up above the lower tarrying dawn on Gaurisankar's brow, or Fuji's matchless cone, or the songs of the Alps before sunrise, and the white silver of the Poles, and Adam's Peak piercing the sky above the mists of sleeping Ceylon; and the great and wide sea also in tempest or in calm, and all that pass through the paths of the seas, and the songs of birds, and the glory of the midnight sky, and Sirius, Orion and the Pleiades with undimmed splendour, and that land of far distances, the gleam perceived or felt of the sixteen hundred million stars of light. Do we not see the King in His beauty there? And the thought of that hateful intruder, Death, coming in with the spy and traitor Sin—Death by Sin—and blight and decay and fading and sorrow and sighing coming too; how hateful is this disturber of the harmony and loyalty of nature, and how glad the promise of the

restitution of all things, the new heavens and new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness, "balmier and fresher for the bath of fire," incorruptible then, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, "where everlasting spring abides and never-withering flowers."

But now, close by me is Christ entering into and controlling the life of the nation and of the nations. Am I not concerned to know first, how my near and farther neighbours are faring; and secondly, how all under this fair heaven and on this wonderful earth of His are touching with many-coloured hands of faith His golden sceptre; and how the *multæ terricolis linguæ* in prayer and praise and audible creed are hailing the King in their lives and homes, and learning the one language of the celestials? Shall we not resolve for the future to deal not so much with problems and the study of their solution as with practical and immediate working ourselves, and leading or influencing or following other loyal subjects of the King in work?

Look down this street of respectable houses in your parish. Look deeper back into what they call slums. Or regard your country parish scattered on the hill-side or in field or meadows below; is not Christ waiting with royal prerogative, and with a knock again and again of the love that passes knowledge at each door? Have you visited not the sick alone or churchgoers only, but every single homestead as your King's ambassador, with not a mere civil pastoral greeting or polite interchange of courtesy, but with a definite summons, expressed with all the mingled authority and gracious persuasion of the King Himself, to welcome and enthrone Christ in family life and the life of the whole court or row or countryside? Shall we not urge them no longer to deem it bad form to speak of the King when they sit down and when they rise up, but to welcome His presence as shaming bad words and doubtful talk and intemperance and immorality, His presence the while like sunshine making merriment yet merrier, and His joy their strength even in duties of homely work?

Let me anticipate here the appeal and argument which follow for foreign mission work, by the warning that we are in danger in these modern and restless days of thinking the method of evangelization best suited to present thought and prejudice to be a somewhat diffident and cautious request to the intelligent people whom we may accost, that they should study with an impartial mind the

claims of Jesus Christ. And if after unfettered search, the hearer is inclined to recognize these claims, will he not go further in his study and follow Jesus Christ? It is a matter of choice and hardly a matter of urgency or connected with the eternal issues. Should not this rather be our attitude? "The message which we bring to you is a command. This is His commandment, that we should believe in His Son Jesus Christ." It is a proclamation and a summons as from the King, a summons indeed of divine power and potency for eternal bliss, but at the same time a question of serious and pressing solemnity. Do not neglect the day of opportunity and the offer of salvation.

We enter now those portions of the nation's life represented by the words landlord and tenant, capital and labour, the council-room and the workshop, and you demand that the King shall speak here, graciously compelling self-seeking to be silent, and these two questions to govern all debate: What are my duties? What are the rights and needs of others? Masters, this is the King's own word: Give to those who help and serve you that which is just and equal, for they are in prospect if not in reality freedmen of the great King and to reign hereafter. Men, serve from loyalty to God your King, for these masters and employers of labour are themselves the Lord's bondservants, fellow-citizens of yours in the heavenly kingdom. It is a family affair; naturally, *γυνησιως*, care for the state of the rest of the family and not for your own alone.

But the King must enter and reign in the very centre of the beating heart of the nation's life; the King of kings must preside and reign in the King's council and council chamber, and in the cabinet Jesus Christ must be not a mere honorary member or one occasionally summoned to the council, but President, and deciding each controversy not by the mere weight of casting vote or regal veto, but by the constraint of His all-wise and all-good principles and will. Our English king has, we know, loyally laid his crown at the feet of the Divine Sovereign, and will ever welcome His counsel and will. But each member of the Government must do the same, and each member of Parliament, legislating not for party and subdivided parties, not for the will of the people alone, seldom if ever unanimous, not for diplomatic strategy, but that God's good will be done, His glory maintained unimpaired, and the highest good of man, high and low, rich and poor together, secured in the life which speaks

truth, hates wrong, lives straight, does good, and follows the King. Legislation will then be a subject and prospect of good hope and contentment, and not of apprehension and dread, where Christ lives and reigns.

The nation's life must mean also the Empire's life, and premising that if speedily through the rushing mighty wind of the Holy Ghost our whole nation, including the Irish Nationalists and Unionists, acclaims Jesus Christ to rule and guide, and not Sinn Fein ideals, or Rome's hidden machinations, or racial grudge; and if that life and influence and ideal spreads to international life and controls Russia, France, Italy and our allies generally, circumventing and arresting the false ideals and ambitions of the Teutonic Powers, then alone and then surely will life worth the living be restored and peace worth striving for be secured.

But our National Mission, with its call to enthrone Christ as the Way, the Truth, the Life of individuals and nations, must in mere loyalty to our Lord touch the whole Empire, the Colonies and the Dependencies, with the same electric life and loyalty for Christ. We now pray for and proclaim and expect the coming of Christ's divine rule, and Dagon itself falling from its seat hears the words, "Worship Him all ye gods!" sounding in hearts and consciences of philosopher and idolater alike. And not by might, not by power, but by the Spirit of God blessing mightily the foolishness of preaching and the Church's united fervour of evangelization, it is our nation's duty to foster that spiritual, international, imperial life. A highly patriotic act in this war-time this will become, for Empire being given to us for this high object we shall retain it or lose it as we either perform this duty of truest charity to its component parts, or neglect it. And, finally, international relationship of England's restored spiritual life, of Christ living and reigning through all its counsels and policies and enterprise, must touch likewise all nations, and the great awakening East with ever-increasing force. For how, we may ask, can revived spiritual life and loyalty in the hearts and lives of the Church and nation, corporate and individual, be a reality, unless every Christian deems it not a mere work of self-denial and exceptional devotion, but an object of sacred ambition and supreme desire to go to the front; for this means promotion not banishment, the noblest profession and occupation ourselves or our sons and daughters can aspire to; and this, too, with the humility of the

thought that with reference to this work for which the Church exists, so far from its being unworthy of our highest powers, we are unworthy of participating in it. Will not this National Mission of Repentance and Hope, if effectual and not transient in the nation and Church, create a national mission to non-Christian lands, and hasten the coming of the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

I close with the bare statement, without exposition or argument, of my last subject which is the supreme sovereignty of Christ and His Life in the life and everlasting bliss of things in the heavens as well as things in the earth. The encyclical letter of the archbishops and bishops after the Lambeth Conference of 1908 contained these words: "The brightness of Christ's light is in the scene before us, as we think of the Church showing forth in the world with ever-increasing clearness the glory and happiness of service. But the vision is not bounded by the horizon of the world; its true meaning is not known until we raise our eyes beyond this horizon and above the scenes of time." Some years earlier than this encyclical, in Liddon's Bampton Lectures we were reminded that in the Epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians the Church is considered as a vast spiritual society, which besides containing in its heritage all races of the world, pierces the veil of the unseen and includes the families of heaven in its majestic compass. So speaks the Holy Ghost to the prophets and apostles in His Word: "The heavens are thine, O Lord; the earth also is Thine." And God's thoughts and love occupied, if we may say so, for a while in the mystery of condescension on this tiny speck in creation, the earth, yet made it the cynosure of all and the centre from which Divine wisdom and power and saving grace shall affect all creation. All things in the heavens and in the earth have been created through Christ and unto Him, and shall be restored to the bliss of subjection to His reign and love, alienated though they have been and shaken from that allegiance; and by Christ through the blood of His Cross shall all things be reconciled unto God, all things whether things upon the earth or things in heaven, and now unto the principalities and powers in the heavenly places shall be made known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God. May we too take part in that great International Mission!

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