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Union Seminary Magazine

VOL. XIX.

APRIL—MAY, 1908.

No. 4.

TENNYSON'S RELIGIOUS BELIEFS

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Alfred Tennyson is the most representative English poet of the nineteenth century. For this reason the religious beliefs held by him and expressed in his poetry are of peculiar interest to any student of religious thought. But let us endeavor to understand what his beliefs were before undertaking to measure the significance of his holding and teaching them.

We turn first to one of his earliest poems, *The Palace of Art*. Opening with the statement,

"I built my soul a lordly pleasure-house,
Wherein at ease for aye to dwell,"

he proceeds to describe this lordly pleasure-house of his soul as furnished with all the treasures of literature and art from all the ages. Then the soul in "Godlike isolation," separating herself from God and from men, whom she despises as "droves of swine," says at last:

"I take possession of man's mind and deed,
I care not what the sects may brawl.
I sit as God holding no form of creed,
But contemplating all."

HOW CAN EVERY CHURCH BECOME A MISSIONARY CHURCH*

BY REV. J. M. WELLS, D. D., WILMINGTON, N. C.

It is my purpose to try and make this talk practical. You at this fountain of learning already have the theory. As your courses in exegesis have made clear the one supreme missionary book; as your course in history has made plain the Church's great work in the past; as you have been thrilled by the picture of the world's need brought by our devoted missionaries; as the message written and spoken of our great missionary enthusiasts, such men as Speer and Mott, has come to you, you have learned the theory of Missions far better than I could tell you. So I take for granted you desire the practical side from the pastor's point of view.

The majority of you will soon be where I am now; and, facing existing conditions of lethargy and indifference, as well as love and energy, will undertake the task of making or keeping some church a missionary church. You are apt to find practice more difficult than theory. One of the most striking passages in Stalker's writings is found in the introductory lecture of his Yale lectures of 1891. It is his description of the difference between criticism and performance. "Criticism," he says, "however brilliant, is a comparatively easy thing. It is easier to criticize the greatest things superbly than to do even small things fairly well." And it is easier to form a matchless theory of the missionary church than it is to bring up a real church to very imperfect attainment as a missionary church.

Taken absolutely, my subject is an impossible one. "How can every church become a missionary church?" There are no missionary churches—absolutely. As compared with the intense en-

*An address delivered before the Society of Missionary Enquiry of Union Theological Seminary.

thusiasm and burning zeal and fervent love and generous giving that should mark our churches, there is not a missionary church in our whole borders. But, as measured by other churches, and by what churches have been in the past, there are missionary churches, and we may hope for many more.

And that you might learn how other men have made their churches missionary churches, I wrote to twenty men in our church, who seem to have accomplished this, asking how their churches became missionary churches. What I have to say to you to-night is largely the garnered experience of these men.

How can every church become a missionary church?

1st. *By having a Missionary Pastor.*

Here is the key to the situation as to missions: sometimes it is "like people, like priests"; far oftener it is "like priest, like people."

If you are aflame with zeal for missions, you may be called to the deadest, coldest church in the land, and in a few years can quadruple its interest and work. If you are indifferent, you can in a few years well-nigh stifle the life of missions in a church.

The missionary pastor is the pastor—

1. Who *believes* that men are lost; that Jesus Christ came to seek and to save the lost, and that it is the Christian's duty to carry the knowledge of Christ the whole world round.

2. Who *knows* why he believes; what the needs of the world are, and something of the victories of the cross.

3. Who *loves* Jesus Christ with a great, supreme love, and for his sake loves the great sinning, sorrowing world.

4. Who *works*; hearing the Father's command, "Son, go work to-day in my vineyard," and realizes that work is not only God's command, but a condition of growth, an essential to happiness and God's ordained way of bringing the coming of His kingdom.

5. Who *plans* wisely, tactfully and aggressively large things for the coming of the kingdom.

6. Who *prays*, laying hold in his finiteness upon the infinite power and love and grace of an infinite God.

And the influence of such a pastor lives on long after his ministry. I have been much impressed by what certain men have written me of the men who preceded them—who, through powerful preaching and missionary enthusiasm, laid broad a foundation on which it is easy for them to build. Truly blessed and fortunate are those of us who follow such men.

2d. By providing Missionary Information.

The true Christian must know his duty, the world need and something of results. Knowing these, he is ready to respond.

How can these be best brought to his attention?

1. By preaching on the subject by the pastor. There are certain phases of the subject that can come more strongly from him than from any one else. His it is to ground the obligations to missions on the great teachings of the word of God. Philanthropy, pity, self-interest, denominational loyalty, must all fail to rouse men to so colossal an undertaking. There must be a "thus saith the Lord." Duty and loyalty to the Saviour who sends must be secured. His it is to show the true motive. Love for Christ, constrained by his love for us, is the true motive for our gifts. His it is to make clear the fact that we are God's stewards, holding what we have from him in trust and not in fee simple.

2. By addresses by missionaries and secretaries. These men furnish the facts that are needed. They show the condition of the heathen world. They lay bare the moral putrescence of the lost races. They reveal the dire need and bitter sorrow of woman. They make known the helplessness and hopelessness of children away from Christ. They make clear what God hath wrought—how the gospel meets the need of every race; how it transforms character in every land; how it ennobles womanhood and rescues childhood wherever it goes.

3. By letters from the field. If you have your own missionary, he should write you once a month. If you have shares in a station, you should have letter once a quarter. These letters tell of the place, of the people, of the church, of the hospital, of the school, of the itinerating trip, of the power of God at work

in saving souls and transforming lives. They make that distant work real and interesting.

Read the letter at the monthly concert of prayer for missions. Put live extracts from it in your church calendar. Use thoughts from it as illustrations in your sermons.

4. By teaching the young. Here is your great opportunity. Many of your adults will never do what you may—be really interested in missions. Train up a generation that will be interested. Have a Sunday-school superintendent who will drop a word now and then. Seek to use your teachers as a teaching force for missions. In your girl societies and Covenanter bands, have regular instruction. Speak a word as you meet the children about missions. And remember that time invested in teaching the children is probably the very best investment you can make. It pays richly.

5. By mission study classes. Many find these classes exceedingly helpful. Systematic study is, of course, helpful. Properly taught, the right courses chosen, and enthusiasm, interest and perseverance enlisted, they yield great returns; and with these I would mention the circulation of the "*Missionary*" and of fresh, vigorous books.

6. By securing the attendance of your men at the great conventions for men, and of your women at the meetings of your missionary unions. From these mountains of privilege they return with information and inspiration that will bless your whole church.

3d. *By having proper Missionary Organization.*

In all organization, the ideal sought is the maximum of efficiency with the minimum of machinery. We recognize, of course, that the church is God's great missionary society, and any organization that loses sight of this is to be deprecated. This organization is but the calling of certain individuals in the church to definite phases of service and endeavor for definite ends.

In speaking of organization, I can not do better than tell you of the organization of a church with which I am acquainted. There are first the central missionary committees, one for Home,

and one for Foreign Missions. These committees are made up of representatives from the session and Board of Deacons, the Sunday-school superintendent, the presidents of the missionary society and the pastor. These committees, under the session, shape and direct the missionary activities of that church. There are ladies' missionary societies, both home and foreign. There are girls' missionary societies, both home and foreign. There is the Covenanter Band for the boys. There is a family missionary society in which one family, as a memorial to their beloved mother, is already supporting one, and is pledged to support all of her descendants who will go to the foreign field. There are individuals who have gone out at their own charges, and individuals who are supporting missionaries. There are groups of individuals supporting evangelists at home and missionaries abroad. The key to success in such organization is to give every individual, group or society a definite work to do. Where a dozen men see from week to week their evangelist holding meetings and bringing scores of souls to Christ, they gladly support him. When the societies are called on to send out and support a trained nurse to take the woman's building of their hospital, a definite work for the Master with definite results, they regard it as a privilege. When a group is shown a whole county in dire need of the gospel, they willingly send an evangelist there. When an individual with the grace and means sees a community entirely without a preacher, he gladly supplies the need. Every individual in the church enlisted in the support of some definite form of mission work, is the ideal of organization.

The organization of the church I bear in mind, enables them to support ten missionaries and four missionary teachers, and to give during the past year \$6,300 for Home Missions, and \$3,300 for Foreign Missions.

4th. *By True Missionary Giving.*

The Church must be educated to the point where it recognizes the great truth of stewardship. That all we have as well as all we are, we hold in trust for God. When this is recognized, then all that is needed is to show them the greatest need. **Keep**

clearly before your church what proper giving is. They must know that giving is an act of worship; that God has appointed one way and one alone for the support of His Church, and that is the free-will offering of the redeemed people. God will honor the church that thus honors Him, and turns its face resolutely from all unwarranted and unbiblical methods of raising money. Opinions differ widely as to the best way of bringing these free-will offerings into His treasury for missions. Some find annual subscriptions taken at the beginning of the year, and reaching as large a number of the members as possible, the best way. Others find permanent subscriptions, good until revoked, the best. Dr. Cobb, of Elizabeth, N. J., has a plan of one great annual collection, with envelopes put into the hands of every man, woman and child in his congregation, and with the collection preceded by two real prayer meetings for missions, the strongest sermon possible on the preceding Sunday; by which he has increased his collection from \$65 to \$3,250. Others take a great Christmas offering. After all, the way must be wrought out by the individual to suit the individual church.

5th. *By Prayer.*

No great spiritual achievement can be accomplished without prayer. Prayer is the agency through which hostility is conquered, indifference is roused, love is inspired and generosity is created. You have read Speer's great address on "Prayer and Missions." If not, don't fail to do so. It is very illuminating and inspiring. I do not suppose any church ever became a missionary church without prayer and a great deal of prayer. I recall one church where each year before the main collection for Foreign Missions there is a season of earnest, united and continued prayer. I recall another where, fixing the amount the church ought to subscribe at a very high figure, the officers met daily for prayer, for weeks, literally praying the subscriptions up to the high level desired.

I am reminded of another church where one of the "shut ins" was the prayer power in the church. A very active worker for missions, she had organized nearly one hundred missionary so-

cieties, when she was laid aside from active work, an intense sufferer. Her work-life largely ended, her prayer-life began with new power. The little upper chamber became the centre of power for that church. And it was prevailing prayer; for when God called her home to glory, the church for which she had been praying sprang forward in two years from \$1,500 a year, to \$3,300 in its gifts for Foreign Missions. Prayer is the key God puts in the hands of every pastor, yea, every Christian, whereby he can open the door of opportunity, and let his church go forth into large places of glorious service and generous giving.

Martin Luther, toiling wearily and painfully up the steps at Rome, on his knees, was inspired to see a better, truer way for the end he sought. But the pastor, seeking the good of a true missionary church, can find no better way—yea, can find no other way—to reach that goal, than on his knees, the way of prayer.