

THE CHURCH'S DIVINELY APPOINTED MISSION.

*"Seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy,
we faint not." – 2 Cor. 4:1.*

WHAT is the mission of the Church? – What ministry or service has the Lord appointed to his consecrated people? This question is one that should be prominent and clear before the mind of every consecrated child of God. It is of the utmost importance that the servant know what is expected of him before proceeding far in rendering service; otherwise he will be more than likely to waste his energies in wrong directions – leaving undone those things which ought to be done, and giving attention to matters which would better be attended to otherwise according to the plan and arrangement of the great Supervisor of the plan of salvation – the Lord.

The answers to this question throughout Christendom would probably divide themselves into three groups – two of them quite unscriptural, and the third, altho Scriptural, by reason of other errors generally associated with it, is made unreasonable, and held in its purity and consistently by but few. We will examine these as follows:

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(1) THE ROMAN CATHOLIC VIEW of the Church's mission is that she is the ruler of the world, appointed to be such by the Almighty, and duly empowered and authorized to rule over kings and nations, to order all the affairs of earth, moral, political, financial, social and ecclesiastical, – the pope and his hierarchy constituting this spiritual kingdom. This spiritual kingdom, it claims, reigned gloriously in the past, – during the period which the remainder of mankind denominate "the Dark Ages." They claim that now this kingdom is suffering a reverse at the hands of infidelity, Protestantism, etc., and is deprived of its proper, God-given and God-intended rights, as the supreme government of the earth. It claims

that very shortly there will be a grand [R2413 : page 7] change in earth's affairs, which will put back again, into its possession and under its control absolutely, all peoples, nations, kindreds and tongues, so that again, as of yore, the pope shall be the recognized head of the world, all other religions be overthrown and effectually stamped out, and that thus the world shall be blessed – by a return to medieval conditions.

We dispute this theory, and hold that the Scriptures teach to the contrary: that the reign of the Church as the Kingdom of God to rule and bless the world is declared to be not during this "present evil world" or age, but in one to follow this, to be inaugurated by our Lord Jesus with power from on high, at his second advent. The Scriptures point out, in harmony with sound reason, that the *sufferings* of the Church are not coincident with her *reign*, but precede it. The sufferings of this present time, they assure us, are not worthy to be compared with the glories which shall be (future) revealed in us. (Rom. 8:18.) These sufferings, tho they are to be unto death, are to be esteemed light afflictions and to be rejoiced in, because of the divine assurance that they are *working out for us* (preparing us for) a far more exceeding and an eternal weight of glory, as yet unseen. – 2 Cor. 4:17.

(2) THE COMMON VIEW AMONGST PROTESTANTS respecting the mission of the Church resembles the foregoing considerably, except that the pope and his associates are rejected as respects their claims to special divine authority to rule the world. The claim of the Protestants, however, is that religion should undertake to rule the world, and to place its representatives in power amongst the nations; and that higher and better forms of religious sentiment should be cultivated, the religion of the world growing with its politics and its social conditions, and thus leading the world onward and lifting the degraded masses up to good citizenship. In other words, this claim, growingly prevalent amongst Protestants, is what may be termed the worldly idea of the Church's mission; *viz.*, to

engage in merciful, philanthropic, educational, moral and benevolent works, in the interest of mankind. In other words, this view recognizes the Church as the moral influence which God has placed in the world *for the world's uplift* and regeneration.

We hold that this view is wrong, wholly unscriptural; that it is a mistake to suppose that the Church is placed in the world as a reformatory institution. But if we are asked, Should Christians not take a deep interest in all reforms – in temperance reform, for instance, in social purity, in political reform, in good citizenship, in anti-tobacco crusades, in socialistic developments, in financial reforms, etc.? we answer, Yes, indeed; no one could be a true Christian and yet be without sympathy as respects all these and every other possible effort for the mental, moral and physical uplift of our race. And yet you say that this is not the mission of the Church? Yes, we answer; altho our sympathies are with every good work, we are at the same time to inquire of the Lord respecting how, where, what, we may do in his service, if we would be colaborers together with him – "Lord, what wouldst *thou* have me to do?" Our query should not be addressed to fellow-men, nor should we accept the burdens and duties and obligations which their judgments and consciences would lay upon us. Rather we are to hearken to the voice of the Lord (the Scriptures), and are to follow his directions, regardless of our own and other people's conjectures as to what would be most expedient.

Nowhere in the Scriptures are God's people directed to spend their time in efforts at morally reforming the world. Our Lord did not engage in this work, neither did the apostles, nor did they offer any suggestion to the effect that the work of the Church should ever differ from the work which they performed and directed us to continue. On the contrary, they declare that we have the apostles for ensamples of how we ought to walk. They declare that our Lord's course was in full, perfect harmony with the divine will and plan, and that the apostles faithfully followed his example: and we are exhorted to

simply become coworkers together with God in his work, already instituted, – not to alter or attempt to improve on them. There were moralists and moral reformers in our Lord's day; some along the line of total abstinence, some along the line of asceticism, inculcating rigid self-denials in food, clothing, etc., as essential to a moral uplift of the people. There were also political reformers, who sought the establishment of republican institutions, in his day; and social reformers, who sought to establish forms of communism. There were also dress reformers at that time, who advocated certain peculiar styles of clothing, beneficial to health, morals and religious sanctity. Do we find that our Lord or his apostles ever associated with any of these, or that they ever in any word or act gave sanction or encouragement to any of these theories or reforms? No, not once.

It may, indeed, be claimed that a kind of Christian communism at the beginning went without rebuke, even if it were not commended by the apostles. We answer that the short-lived communism of the early Church was to some extent the result of the new doctrines promulgated by Christ, the central feature of which was love to God and love to fellow-men, as opposed to the selfish sentiments of fallen man: so that without divine instruction there was a disposition on the part of believers to have "all things in common." But if the holy spirit sanctioned and permitted this, in the beginning, it was evidently only as a lesson, as an **[R2414 : page 8]** experience to the Church, to show that union and communion of this kind is not practicable under present conditions, while all are troubled by imperfections of the flesh – their own and that of other men. At all events we do know that the Lord did not permit that communism to last long, but, as we are told, permitted instead a great persecution to arise against the Church, which scattered the would-be communists everywhere to preach the Gospel.

Nor did the apostles ever recommend such procedure, or attempt such an arrangement amongst the Christians elsewhere. If, then, the teaching and example of our Lord and his apostles are our criterion

of the will of the Lord, the Church's commission is not to morally reform the world. But perhaps someone will say, Times are changed from what they were, and the Church's work should change accordingly. We answer, that the Apostle Paul declares in so many words, "I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God." (Acts 20:27.) Whatsoever, therefore, is additional to that which was stated by the Apostle is not the counsel of God. And any counsel from any other quarter is not to be received by Christians, and is sure to be misleading. Again, the Apostle says to Timothy, respecting the Word of God, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, *thoroughly furnished* unto all good works." (2 Tim. 3:16,17.) If, therefore, it was God's design that the Church's mission should change at some future time we should be able to find in the Scriptures some intimation of this kind, and some authority for the change. And if we find no authority for a change in her mission, we should make no change.

But some one inquires, Did not our Lord especially go after the publicans and sinners, and specially welcome them; and was not this an indication to us that the Church's work is to be largely amongst the lower, depraved classes of mankind? We answer that the publicans and harlots were not made the subjects of special missionary efforts on the part of our Lord and his apostles: it was when these classes *came to his ministry*, to his preaching, manifested interest therein and signs of repentance and reformation, that he received them cordially; he did not refuse to recognize them, as did the Pharisees. The record is not that he went on slumming missions, after the publicans and harlots, but, he "receiveth [publicans and] sinners," and that many of these lower classes heard him gladly. (Luke 15:2; Mark 12:37.) Furthermore, be it noticed, these publicans and sinners were members of the Jewish Church – for that entire nation was accepted of God as his people, and they were all included under the typical sacrifices for sin, on the Day of Atonement; and

they were all reckoned as under the Law Covenant – Covenanters. These lower classes had slipped away from the outward observance of the Jewish law, but our Lord testified that many of them were in far better condition of heart to receive his message than were many of the outwardly pious Pharisees.

(3) THE CORRECT VIEW OF THE CHURCH'S MISSION.

The question then arises, If the Church is not to rule the world in this present age, and if she is not to be the world's instructor, uplifter, by moral reforms, what is her mission – what other mission can she have? And this brings us to the third view, which quite a number hold in a more or less confused way – their commingled errors beclouding and vitiating the truth.

(a) Her chief mission is toward herself. She is to lift up the light in the world, the True Light, – not with the expectation of enlightening the world, not with the thought that her feeble lamp shall scatter earth's night of sin and darkness of superstition; for that can be accomplished only by the coming of the morning, the Millennial morning, when the Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in his beams. She holds up the light of the truth, the light of the Gospel, during this night, to attract *some* – "a peculiar people" – not to attract and gather *all*, but "even as many as the Lord our God shall *call*." (Acts 2:39.) Her message respecting the love of God and the salvation which is in Christ Jesus, as it rings out into the world, is not expected to awaken the *world* and to lead the world to the Lord. No, she is merely bearing "witness" – a witness which will have to do also with a future knowledge and opportunity to be granted to the *world* during the Millennium.

She is instructed by the Word of the lord not to expect that any but a comparatively small number will appreciate her light or her message: as the Prophet foretold, so she has found it, "Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" (Isa. 53:1; John 12:38.) As the Scriptures declare, so she finds it, that

the vast majority of mankind are blind, so that they cannot see the light: some are stone blind, so as to see nothing: while others are partially blind and can get a little glimmer of it by which they can discern some things indistinctly. In hearing, likewise, the world's ears are dull of hearing – "deaf," say the Scriptures. Some hear nothing, others hear very imperfectly, few hear the message of divine love and mercy clearly and distinctly. The Church is to realize that her mission is not to these, the blind and deaf, but to him "that hath an ear [to hear], – *let him hear!*" – Rev. 2:7; 3:6,13,22.

Our Lord remarked this condition to his followers, [R2414 : page 9] when present with them in the world, saying, "Blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear," and he declared that his parables and teachings were not uttered with the intention of making the blind see and the deaf hear, but purposely so that the deaf might not hear, and so that the blind might not see. When the disciples inquired respecting the interpretation of a parable, he said, "To you it is given to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of God; but to them that are without, all these things are done in parables: that seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand." (Luke 8:10.) They had indeed the natural sight, and the natural hearing, but they lacked the mental sight and hearing. And the message that our dear Master preached, and that he commissioned his apostles and his Church to preach throughout this age, is the same – not for the blind, not for the deaf, but for those "blessed," favored ones who have eyes and ears.

As our Lord did not expect many to respond to his preaching, and particularly implied that only a small number would be able to do so, saying, "No man can come unto me, except the Father which sent me draw him," so his Church throughout this age is to realize that when she lifts up the light and lifts up her voice no man will come in response except as the Father draws him. And as the Father drew only a comparatively small remnant of the Jewish nation to our

Lord, so the Church should not be surprised that he has drawn only a comparatively small proportion of Gentiles throughout this age.

Following our text the Apostle points out why this is the case: why the majority of mankind are not in a condition of heart to see and appreciate the light, to hear and to rejoice in the Gospel, not in the condition to be drawn by the Father. He declares that it is because "the god of this world [Satan] hath blinded their minds" (vs. 4), and thus hindered the light of divine truth from shining unto them. He points out that all such are in a lost condition, without God and without hope in the world. Not, however, that they are any more lost now than they have been all along for six thousand years; for whoever is not in Christ, whoever is out of relationship to God, is a member of that large class, servants of sin, still under condemnation, still strangers from God, still lost in the wilderness of sin. They have not yet been *found* by the great Shepherd who promises that in due time all the true sheep shall be found; – that all the Satan- and prejudice-blinded eyes shall be opened to see the light of divine goodness and truth; and all the deaf ears shall be unstopped to hear the message of the grace of God. – Isa. 35:5.

(*b*) It is another part of the mission of the Church to care for those who do see the light which she holds up, and who are attracted by that light, and who come unto the Lord. She is to teach and instruct such, and to introduce them to the full *fellowship of the high calling* by making clear to them, as the Lord's mouthpiece, "what is the hope of our calling," present and future – now to suffer with Christ for righteousness' sake, to cultivate his spirit, his disposition, to bear much fruit of the spirit in our own hearts and lives, and thus, under divine supervision, to be fitted, polished and prepared for a place in the glorious Temple of the future, for a share in the glorious work of the incoming age, – the blessing of the world. – 1 Cor. 1:26; Eph. 1:18; 2 Thes. 1:11.

The Church is supplied by her glorious Head, Christ Jesus, with certain gifts of the spirit, amongst her members of the earth; and these cworking together in their various offices are to strengthen, establish, upbuild, develop, one another, growing in grace and in the knowledge and spirit of the Head, until the whole Church shall eventually, by the close of this age, be brought to the stature of the fulness of perfection as the Body of Christ, under the Lord Jesus as the Head. (Eph. 4:13.) But she is not to expect that all, even of those who see her light, and who hear her proclamation, and who draw near in harmony with her message, will eventually come into full membership in this glorious Body of Christ. On the contrary, she is assured of the Lord in advance that, while only a few, [R2415 : page 9] comparatively, will hear her message, the call, a still smaller number will accept the call – for many are called, proportionately, to the few who are chosen – who make their calling and election sure by faithfulness to the conditions imposed. – 2 Pet. 1:10.

(c) The conditions imposed upon the Church are designed of the Lord to be crucial tests of *her loyalty* to him, and to the law of the New Covenant under which she was received by him. Trials, difficulties, persecutions, are useful in proving whether or not her covenant of consecration is from the heart: those who have merely made a lip covenant will be sifted out, manifested, separated from the true ones whom the Lord designates his jewels, and his sons; and whom he purposes to make joint-heirs in the Kingdom with his well-beloved Son, our Lord Jesus. It is for this reason that this call and election or selection of the Church takes place during this present age, while evil is still permitted to reign in the world, and while the majority of mankind are under the blinding influences of the great Adversary, not yet bound. – Rev. 20:1-3.

As our Lord explained, the darkness of sin and error is in direct antagonism with the light of truth, and consequently when his people lift up the light, – "let their light so shine as to glorify the Father in heaven" who has called them "out of darkness into his [R2415 : page

10] marvelous light," – the effect upon the darkened world will be to awaken opposition, antagonism; because the effect of the light is to make manifest the evils of darkness which would not otherwise appear; and thus to disturb and make uncomfortable those in sympathy with darkness. Consequently those who love darkness, those who love evil, those who love sin, in its varied forms, hate the light, neither come to the light; but either publicly or secretly oppose the children of the light, the enlightened ones, the light-bearers. And even those who have gotten out of the extreme darkness of moral pollution into a kind of twilight of civilized reformation and moral reform cannot endure the clear, searching light of the true Gospel; they much prefer a measure of darkness. – John 3:20.

It is in consequence of this conflict between light and darkness that our Lord suffered at the hands of those who professed to be children of the light, children of God, and who had at least a little light. Our Lord was not maltreated by the Roman governor and the Roman soldiers of their own volition, for they were so totally blind as not to appreciate anything of the light which he displayed. His persecutors were those who had some light but who hated the brilliancy of the great light which shone upon them. Similarly, all the way down through this Gospel age those who have been burning and shining lights in the world have been hated and persecuted, largely, we might say chiefly, almost exclusively, by those who had some light, but whose light was darkness in comparison to the great light of the holy spirit shining in and through the Lord's fully consecrated ones. Thus was fulfilled our Lord's testimony, "If they have hated me, they will also hate you." "Whosoever will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." The Lord's followers in the present time are called upon to suffer persecution for righteousness' sake, not because it is either reasonable or proper, but because the Lord, wishing to test, prove and polish his people, is willing to permit the evil, opposing influences to prosper, and persecute and oppose his "members," and thus to serve his cause in the preparation of his elect for a future work of service. Thus the persecutors of the "Body," like

the persecutors of the Head, are cooperating to fulfil the divine plan in a manner they little suspect. – John 15:18; 1 John 3:13; 2 Tim. 3:12; 1 Thes. 2:14,15; 2 Thes. 3:4; John 16:2; Acts 14:22.

We might multiply the Scriptural declarations that this is the call of the Church in the present time – to let the light shine and thus to attract persecution, and to endure the persecution for righteousness' sake, and to be rightly exercised by it in patience, brotherly-kindness, pity and love – toward the persecutors and toward all men.

As it was the mission of our Lord not to rule the world, nor to judge the world, at his first advent, but to lay down his life for the world, so it is the mission of the Church, the Body of Christ, not to rule the world, nor to judge the world now, but to "lay down our lives for the brethren." (1 John 3:16.) Our Lord declares, "I came not to judge the world." (John 12:47.) The Son of Man came to lay down his life for the world. (John 6:51; 10:15.) "My Kingdom is not of this world." (John 18:36.) And so the Apostle assures us that we are not to reign now, but on the contrary to suffer with Christ, if we would reign with him by and by: that we are not to judge the world now, but on the contrary to judge nothing before the time; but he assures us that in God's due time the saints shall judge the world, and that to the world's blessing. He assures us that it is our mission "to fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ, for his body's sake, which is the Church." (Col. 1:24.) He tells us, along the same line, that while we are to do good unto all men as we have opportunity, our service is to be specially to the household of faith. Our efforts that will go toward the world of mankind in general are to be only the side-glances, as it were, the overflow of our efforts expended chiefly and directly upon the members of the body of Christ, the consecrated Church, – expended in building one another up in the most holy faith. – Rom. 8:17; 1 Cor. 4:5,6; 6:2; Gal. 6:10.

(d) Quite a goodly number of Protestant Christians theoretically take more or less of the position which we have herein stated,

especially our Presbyterian and Baptist friends. But when we come to consider God's object in thus specially dealing with the Church we find that very few indeed even of these have any comprehension of it. The general thought is that God merely wishes to elect the Church, and that he is thoroughly indifferent as respects the poor world, that for six thousand years has lain in a lost condition under the blinding influence of Satan, and deaf to the Gospel call. Here we must differ, for we find the Scriptures to teach a much more wonderful, much more just, much more benevolent, much more grand plan of God than that.

We find it to teach that this Church, now being selected or elected, is merely a first-fruit unto God of his creatures, and that a great work is to be done for the world of mankind, through this Church, after she shall have been glorified and associated with her Lord in the heavenly Kingdom. The same Scriptures which tell us that now the world is blind and deaf, and that Satan, "the prince of this world," "the god of this age," has directly and indirectly had much to do with this blindness, tell us also that the time is to come when all the blind eyes shall be opened, and all the deaf ears [R2415 : page 11] shall be unstopped, and when Satan, the great deceiver, shall be bound, restrained, permitted no longer to deceive humanity. These Scriptures assure us that the Church now being selected and proved, and thus made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light, is to be God's *channel* of blessing to mankind; and that Head and Body, Jesus and his Church, shall constitute in the full sense the promised "Seed of Abraham," or Spiritual Israel, through which all mankind shall be blessed with a knowledge of God's true character, and with an opportunity for gaining eternal life in the Millennial judgment day which God has appointed. – Gal. 3:16,29.

One of the particular trials with many of the Lord's people is that they are frequently upbraided by less consecrated, worldly-wise professors, with the suggestion that they are selfish, and neglectful of the true work of the Church, because they do not join with others

in the various political, social, financial and moral reforms of the world; or in "revival" efforts to drive and scare the worldly, whom God has not "called" by the truth along Scriptural lines. If we are obliged to endure something on this score for Christ's sake, it is only a part of "the sufferings of Christ" in which we should rejoice; realizing that the Lord knows our faithfulness to him and to his Word. We may realize, also, that in due time others shall see the divine plan actually fulfilling, as we are now permitted to see it by the eye of faith; and they will then see that the "wise virgins" were *wise* in that they hearkened to and obeyed the Lord's Word, and made themselves ready for the future work of service for the world. – Rev. 19:7; Eph. 4:12.

We can sympathize with those who see nothing; we can sympathize also with those who see a little, and who strive toward moral and other reforms, and in various ways for the sectarian prosperity rather than for the upbuilding of the saints, the Church of the living God, whose names are written in heaven. We should have patience, particularly with those who give evidence that they are laboring in harmony with their convictions. If they are engaging in good works of any kind they deserve our sympathy, and undoubtedly will obtain a blessing as a result. The true Church is laboring not merely for *a* blessing, but for *the* blessing – "*the prize* of our high calling of God in Christ Jesus." (Phil. 3:14.) Let all, then, who see the prize, and who see the light of God's glory shining in the face of Jesus Christ our Lord, be faithful to the Father's terms, conditions, calling, service. Let all such give attention to this ministry (service) which we have received, and faint not; be not discouraged, whether men hear or whether they forbear, whether they think ill of us or whether they speak ill of us; let us remember that our report at the end of the trial is to be rendered to the Lord himself, when he is making up his jewels. Let us remember that the first condition of acceptance with him is loyal *obedience* to his Word, the **[R2416 : page 11]** evidence of love for him and faith in him. (2 Cor. 10:5,6.) Let us remember, also, that the second qualification he will look for

in us is love for the brethren, readiness to be, to do and to suffer, to die on behalf of those who are really, truly consecrated children of God, seeking to walk in his ways.

All thus following in the ministry (the service) which we have received of God, find themselves to-day walking in the footsteps of Jesus and the apostles, and find the various predictions made respecting the entire Church applicable to its living members also, as, for instance, following our text, the Apostle declares of this class who have this ministry: –

"We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants [the Church's servants, not the world's servants] for Jesus' sake.... We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, yet not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus [always representing Christ and his sacrifice as dying members of his body] that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we which live [as new creatures in Christ Jesus] are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake [our consecration at the beginning was a consecration to death; it changes not; it will always so continue, until we have finished our course and have actually died], that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh." – Verses 5-11.

In other words, the truly consecrated Church of Christ, all "whose names are written in heaven," are his representative members upon the earth, throughout this Gospel age. The Head suffered eighteen hundred years ago, the members of the Body have since been suffering with him, and have been learning the same lessons of obedience to the divine will, and trust and confidence in the divine wisdom, and love for the brethren; and by and by the entire Body of Christ will have finished its course, and will have been received by the Head into his glory, and then will begin God's great work for the world, for which all his dealings with the Church are but the divine

preparation. In the Church the Lord will give to the world Kings, to rule in righteousness, – in love, instead of in selfishness and pride; but the Church will also be Priests, to bless with the knowledge of the truth, and with help out of the mire of sin, back to full harmony with God, all who desire to return to him. It will then be true, "Thou hast made us unto our God Kings and Priests: and we shall reign on the earth." – Rev. 5:10. [R2417 : page 12]

NOW HIS WILL IS MINE – 1899.

"Once I sought a blessing; now I've found my Lord;
Once I sought for feeling: now I've found his Word;
Once his gifts I wanted: now the Giver own;
Once I sought flesh-healing: now himself alone.

"Once it was my working: his it hence shall be;
Once I tried to use him: now he uses me;
Once the power I wanted: now the mighty One;
Once for self I labored: now for Christ alone.

"Once 'twas painful trying: now 'tis restful trust;
Once a half-salvation: now the uttermost;
Once 'twas ceaseless holding: now he holds me fast;
Once 'twas constant drifting: now my anchor's cast.

"Once 'twas busy planning: now 'tis trustful prayer;
Once 'twas anxious caring: now he has the care;
Once 'twas what I wanted: now what Jesus says;
Once 'twas constant asking: now 'tis ceaseless praise.

"Once I hoped in Jesus: now I know he's mine;
Once my lamps were dying: now they brightly shine;
Once for death I waited: now his presence hail,
And my hopes are anchored safe within the veil."
