1914

The divine program

S E N I O R T H E S I S

"T H E D I V I N E P R O G R A M"

J . W E S L E Y P R O P E R .

THE DIVINE PROGRAM.

The divine program involves the ultimate salvation of the world. The steps in that program are stated in Christ's parting words: " Ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth".

God himself has been the prime mover in the working out of his divine program. He was the prime factor in the success of Saint Paul's missionary labor. He not only worked with Paul but also before Paul. Thru Alexander God diffused the Greek language thoughout the scenes of Saint Paul's future missionary activities . It, thus, was God who blazed the way by spreading a common language. Again, thru Roman roads and Roman religions toleration he made possible the rapid spread of the gospel thruout the Roman Empire. Once more, in the Jewish Diaspora we see the movement of the divine hand. Throughou the whole then known world, the Jews wandered in quest of a larger soil on which Christianity later took root.

In our own land we CAN trace the movement of the divine hand. God has constantly extended what we call our Home Mission work by constantly enlarging our territory , In 1803, first came the purchase of the Louisiana country from Napoleon Bonaparte. In 1819 Florida was purchased. Texas in 1845 for greater protection desired to be annexed as a state and was admitted. New Mexico was purchased in 1848. Thru the heroism of Marcus Whitman Oregon became a part of our territory. In 1853 thru purchase, the boundaries of New Mexico were extended. Alaska was purchased in 1867, the Hawiian Islands in 1898. As a result of a war with Spain, Porto Rico and the Philippine Islands were added to our territory. Thus the providence of God has tutored us to follow the divine program.

In our so-called foreign Missionary work divine providence has often paved the way. Our demand for foreign Markets and for foreign goods has not only opened the door to the Missionary ,but commercial intercourse has brought about a mutual understanding that makes rapid the spread of the gospel. This acquaintance with all peoples, a knowledge of the geography of the earth, rapid transportation and easy communication are factors that make this a peculiarly Missionary age. With Christianity now established in all the strategic places the world over, no wonder prophets are appealing for, and prophesying the evangelization of the world within the next generation.

The evangelization of the world falls most heavily upon the churches of the United States of America. Because of our degree of development as a nation and because of our geographical position we are commissioned by divine arrangement to bear the gospel to the uttermost parts of the earth. The world is about to enter upon what may be called the third stage of its history. The scene of the first stage constituted the countries about the Mediterranean sea. That represents past history. The theatre of the present stage of history involves the countries about the Atlantic. The scene of the third great drama of history will comprise the countries about the Pacific . The course of human events has been westward . It will enevitably continue to be westward. The Mediterranean exercised a molding influence upon the Atlantic. So, the westward march will surcharge the Pacific with the life of the Atlantic. We then are the divinely chosen people to impart this life. The burden of carrying out the divine program rests with us . The benighted peoples of the earth are in the path of our westward march. Our possession of the Hawiian and Philippine Islands thus proves providental. Our divine commission is unmistakable .

Certain internal qualifications enforce upon us our divine

commission. Our nation's influence in matters in general leads among all nations . Moreover no other nation can furnish such a fund of money and offer such a supply of consecrated men . Surely the task of piloting the redemption of the world for Chirst belongs to the Protestant churches of America.

The saving of the world will after all depend upon proper emphasis given each point of the divine program.

As the Methdist Episcopal church we have not always maintained proper emphasis . We became so intoxicated with the greatness of our foreign opportunity that we neglected our home opportunity. "Beginning at Jerusalem" was never intended by Christ to mean departure from Jerusalem. "Jerusalem" is not the point of departure for a pedestrian, but the fountain of a stream.

If we would keep the stream of missionary activity replemished with zeal , missionaries and means we must guard the fountain of the homeland.

Our unsytematic and sensational calls for missionary instruction, and without sufficent regard for home demands , has not only turned our attention and sometimes with digust , away from the foreign work, but also has weakened our interest in the home work.

We have also been unscientific in our appeal for financial support. We have indulged in the erroneous practice of comparing our giving per capita with the giving per capita of other churches. Saying nothing about the possibility yea the certainty of these other churches being more opulent, this comparison of giving per capita between churches is unbiblical. The only honest comparison is the amount a man gives in comparison with what he reserves for himself . Christ used this method of comparison when He shamed the Pharisees in His commendation of the woman who out of her extreme little cast in two mites.

Again, in our one-sided ardor we have foolishly emphasised the superiorty of foreign missionary work. We ought not thus cheapen the work of the home ministry. It is not in accord with the divine program. For instance, we ought not say, we want the best for the foreign field, but say, we want those who can best adapt themselves for the foreign ministry". Nothing could be more fatal to the foreign missionary cause as to dishearten the ministry of the homeland by even suggesting that it is of lesser importance. We safeguard all concerned when we maintain proper emphasis upon each point of the divine program.

At present, the point of the divine program, "beginning at Jerusalem" needs greater emphasis than it is receiving. For instance, the church does not quite realize the far-reaching importance of Christianzing the immigrant. The immigrant has complicated our labor problem if indeed he has not been the sole cause of our labor problem. Our lack of adequate interest in the immigrant explains in part our lack of interest in the struggling laboring man. Or, perchance it is more our lack of interest in things so mundane as economic welfare that explains our lack of interes in the laboring immigrant. As far as the effect upon the church is concerned it matters not which is the cause and which is the effect. We simply have not been adequately concerned about the lot of the laboring man. If we had been interested in the welfare of the laboring man we would have be en interested in the redemption of the immigrant, for the immigrant is most always a so-called laboring man. What then has been the effect upon the church? Many so-called down town churches have been depleted and others everywhere have been severely weakened. Our lack of ecomonic interest has helped the immigrant supplant the native laboring man. He naturally left the church, even tho he did not always leave the community. On the other hand our lack of spiritual interest in the immigrant has denied us in our churches a substitute for the supplanted native. If we do not rally to the salvation of the

foreigner in our midst , the time is coming when we will be embarrassed with more struggling churches , yea with empty churches.

The church has a peculiar mission in the solution of the labor problem. I can not believe a bowl of soup given as bait to hear a sermon will go far in redeeming the laboring man from economic stress. The gospel indeed does tend to make a man economically independent, but only under certain economic conditions. But in this day at least , the church or intitution proclaiming a saving grace must go deeper than a bowl of soup and a sermon, in the selution of the labor problem. The church must not merely give a free lunch when hungry, or merely open its pews for a night's lodging when shelterless , but help remove the underlying conditions. Poverty and destitution in this day do not for the most part originate from the one stricken, but from some greedy or thoughtless employer or corporation. The church unfortunately has been satisfied too long with things as they are . It has tacitly accepted the existing order of things as more or less permanent.

There is to be sure , a growing demand for a change from the old order of things . But the pulpit on the whole as yet fears to herald its emancipating message. There is danger of crumbling down the pillars of the church. Unfortunately too frequently the pillars of the present day church are not spiritual but financial. There is indeed the danger of bringing on a chaotic condition of affairs. But what is the alternative? The pulpit simply must not spare the rod on the greedy employer . Any mercenary attempt to save the financial self of the church in such hours of human need will surely bring on spiritual decay and death.

When the church fully launches on its mission of solving the so-called labor problem there must be clear understanding as to the scope of its mission. In the first place such a task comes within the function of the church. That day has forever passed when church members must monkishly abstain from facing all the problems of life.

There is an undercurrent of feeing in most of us that the more deeply religious we are the less concerned ought we be about matters not strictly religious. But, on the other hand , the church is not a mere forum for discussing this ot that reform. The church may and must remain a religious institution and not become merely an economic or political institution. The work of the church is to so inspire men and women with a social vision that they will perforce bring the spirit of brotherhood into all the relations of life.

The solution of the labor problem is of far reaching importance. It is the city's principle problem. The solution will be a long step in the direction of saving the city for Christ. If our cities are Christianzed then the Christianzation of America is assured . To save America is to save the world.

The peculuar relation the rural church bears to the urban church deseryes consideration. The vast migration from the country to the cities makes this a very vital question. The country church problem is at present most significantly occupying considerable attention. The problem is two-fold: how best reach the rural population for the upbuilding of the country churches, how save for Christ and for the church the vast mumbers before migrating to the city? We hold that the city cannot long maintain itself without new blood constantly coming in from the country. This applies aswell to the city church. But the vast migration to the cities must be saved for the church before it leaves for the coutry, or it will never in the main be saved. Indeed a heavy responsibility rest upon the coutry church.

If we save the rural population for the upbuilding of the country church then those migrating to the cities will be saved for the city church. Our problem then in reality is not twofold but a single problem. How may we solve our problem? We feel that the ecomonic welfare of the nation depends in large measure upon keeping as large a proportion as possible of the population in the country. In order to do this we advocate bringing as much as possible of the city life out into the country. Something analogous must be brought

to bear in partial solution at least of the country church problem. There ought to be more prevalent exchanges between rural and city church pulpits. Summer vacations may thus be very profitably spent for all concerned . Ministers would better discover themselves. The city minister will have a chance to see if he can stand alone without the bolstering effect of high position, beautiful surroundings and salaried singers. The country minister will most likely really discover himself- and many a city church with great delight will discover a new man . Such exchange of pulpits ought to be enforced. That would, in a very primary sense, be a"beginning at Jerusalem". If such a manner of bringing the city out into the country relative to churches is not possible because of circumstances or pride, then surely there ought to be a greater readiness on the part of those at the service of the whole church to spend more of their time than they do , among country churches. They may hold that they must make their lives count as much as possible by addressing as large congregations as possible. If this doctrine is sound then what becomes of that complacent doctrine handed to rural ministers that they have the privilege of furnishing the nation and the church with the greatest men? It is indeed a grand privilege, but it ought to be appropriated by all possessing a legal right.

Thus we see, in a small way to be sure , that many are the problems of the home ministry , that the part of the divine program of beginning at Jerusalem", must receive its proper emphasis. Call it selfishness if you will, this deep concern for the homeland and for the home church, but it is a selfishness akin to noble self-respect, a selfishness like unto that which possessed Christ who said , " Go teach ---- beginning at Jerusalem".

Anyone possessed of such an interest in the homeland is driven by the very passion within him to love all men. He is no less interested in the foreign land relative to the redemtion of men than he is in the homeland .

The tendency on the part of a no small number to place emphasis on the needs of the homeland, it is needless to say, is a makeshift to evade their whole missionary obligation relative to both home and foreign.

Others more seriously manifest a disbelief in Foreign Missions on the ground that it is an imposition on the foreign people. Superficially considered it does seem like urging upon a people something not welcomed. But when we remind ourselves of the vast numbers from all lands who take it upon themselves to come to Christian America, we are momentarily undecided whether to accept it as a case of suicidal carelessness or surrender our contention of unfair imposition.

There is something inherent in the Christian gospel that ought to dissipate completely any such contention. If we accept Christianity at all we are compelled to acknowledge that God is the ~~Father of All Men. If we accept God as universal Father then~~ are we liscensed ,yea commanded, to make Him known to all peoples. If we are not prepared to avow God universal Father in this sense, perhaps we are ready to admit that Christianity in its benefits to man is superior to all other religions. But the question arises how do we derive these superior benefits ? It is a mere matter of history that the church has profited most when active in the missionary spread of the Gospel. That such is the law we see suggested in the parable of the talents. It is again implied in the parable of the leaven.

The missionary idea is not wanting in the Old Testament. Abraham's going out from Ur of the Chaldeans was certainly missionary in results and that it was missionary in aim we may read in the divine covenant: " In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed". The missionary idea found its way into the Psalmist's song. "Ask of me, and I shall give thee the ~~the~~ heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession".

Christianity, as we see it in its embryonic development in the Old Testament, as we see it in full orb in the New Testament, as we see it in its spread among many peoples, is essentially expansive. We need no greater proof that Christianity is necessarily expansive than the history of the early Christian church. The early church had not the animating tonic of a long line of martyrs, but in its native strength it went forward conquering for Christ the pagan world.

What is the reason for the present weakening interest in foreign missionary zeal? Is it because this is peculiarly a material age? Is this valid reasoning? Can it be, strickly speaking, that the presence of evil accounts for the absence of good? Is it not rather the absence of good that brings on the evil? Must we wait for the withdrawal of evil before we can hope for the good? That would certainly be waiting ~~be waiting~~ on the leisure of Satan. Is it not clear that Christianity is necessarily expansive? Is it not also clear that this declining interest in the spread of Christianity among heathen peoples is because the church, or someone responsible, has not been urgent enough in spreading the missionary spirit?

This late introduction of missions into the corriculum of colleges and theological seminaries is very promising. It will eventually charge the churches with missionary fervor.

When the churches become acquainted, and learn to keep abreast with the ongoings of the kingdom of God among heathen peoples there will result a profound two-fold effect. The one effect, it is needless to emphasize, will be a rally to the support and extension of present foreign missionary work. It is not in human nature when under the discipleship of Jesus Christ to restrain its sympathy when it becomes acquainted with the dire needs of a foreign people. The other effect will be a deepening of spiritual life in the home church. Sympathy once aroused for a less favored people will not end there. It is one of those spiritual qualities, when once acquired that passionately seeks to satisfy human needs everywhere.

The missionary church is indeed a spiritual church. The reverse is also true : a spiritual church is necessarily a missionary church.

The divine program thus involves the salvation of the world: Nothing short of a world vision can hope to realize such a task. It is said that the genius of any great movement is revealed at its genesis. The genius of early Methodism lay in John Wesley's motto, "The world is my parish". If we would launch a redemptive crusade for the saving of any part of the world we must be possessed of a world vision.

Books read:

"The Pastor and Modern Missions " John R . Mott.

" Gods Missionary Plans for the world" Bashford.

Books referred to in part:

" Modern Missions in the East " Lawrence.

" The Church and Her Work." Wilson Phraner.

" The Missionary Pastor". J.E. Adams.

" The Light of the World". Speer

" The Frontier". Ward Platt.

" The Incoming Millions". Grose.

" The Call of the Waters". Crowell.

" The Burden of the City". Horton.

" The New America," Barnes.

" America God's Melting Pat." Craig.

" Conservation of National Ideals".

Our Country and Home Missions". Phraner.

" The Conflict of Christianity with Heatheivsen". Uhlhorn.

Articles read and referred to:

"The Awakened Church ". Shailer Matthews.

" Forms of Missionary Work". Arlo Ayres Brown.

" A Banner Mission Field". Dillon Bronson.

" Home Missions in its relation to the Foreign Missions".

" The Selfishness of Home Missions". Alice M. Guernsey.

" The New Frotier" Bronson.

Minimum of time spent : 72 hours .