

Griffin's History

Chapter X

MISSIONISM AMONG THE AMERICANS

We must now leave the heathen and turn our attention to missionism among our own people. The United States, like other "great and particularly civilized nations," refuse to the missionaries the use of the rattan, whip or cow—hide, which have proved to be such powerful auxiliaries among the ruder tribes of men. Hence we shall now show a different mode of operations, suited to the circumstances. In allusion to the manners and customs of the different nations in which he traveled, the apostle Paul says, "I was all things to all men:" and this the missionaries seem to think, alluded to religious doctrine and practice. And therefore they preach and practice such things as are best calculated to fascinate the carnal mind; to draw large congregations together; and initiate large numbers into their churches.

The avowed object of the great missionary enterprise is to advance the Redeemer's kingdom, to evangelize the world, and usher in the millennium. Money is the power, and the numberless benevolent institutions of the day are the means, by which this grand object is to be accomplished. It is well understood that the evangelizing machinery, however skillfully constructed, will not work without a due application of power. Therefore one of the great cardinal points, at all times, and on all occasions, is to get money. And it would be interesting and instructing to investigate the hundred and one modes in which this is done. Our limits, however, will permit us to notice only a few.

The corrupt interpretations of the scriptures on this subject are so palpable that none but those who are willfully blind, and love to have it so, can be deceived. The following extract from a paper prepared for the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions will exhibit what they are pleased to call the divine plan, viz:

"It is to contribute frequently and stately. Upon the first day of the week. This is frequently, for it is once in seven days. Nor shall we think that God calls too frequently, if he calls once a week, to make some appropriate acknowledgment of his right, by giving a portion of what he gives us, to carry on his peculiar work in the world, and to save the perishing; to save them, not from starvation, but from perdition. Can once a week be too frequently to lay by in store to feed the hungry and clothe the naked? Was it not ordered in the churches of Galatia as well as in the church of Corinth, that the same rule should be observed? And can we hesitate

for a moment to adopt it in regard to the evangelizing of the world. Once a week—can this be too often to make a pecuniary contribution to send the word of life, or the messenger of mercy, announcing life to those who are dead in sin? Were our souls where theirs are, should we think once a week too often to be thought of, and prayed for, and labored for, that we might live? Relief must be had. God has ordered it to be given by us, and given on the first day of the week. Frequently, so that we may never forget it.

"It is to contribute universally, 'every one of you.' It is a duty to contribute frequently and statedly for evangelizing the world. Whose duty is it? The "duty of every Christian. It is a privilege? Whose privilege? Does our Lord demand the service of every one? Does he not, at the same time, allow every one the privilege? Who is it, then, among all his friends, that is to be exempt from the duty? Who that is to be deprived of the privilege? Not one. Due allegiance is expected of all, and due favor is shown to all. It is ordained that every one shall lay by him in store. How suitable and how beautiful is this arrangement! Here the whole church of Christ, the high and the low, the rich and the poor, the male and the female, appear before him on the first day of the week. Nor does any one appear empty. Every one lays by him in store an offering as an acknowledgment of obligation and Thanksgiving. This being done frequently and statedly, and on that day of consecration and blessing, it is suited to produce the most happy results. Here all hearts beat in unison before the face of the Lord. This act is done by every one in his own dwelling, under the eye of the Lord, who seeth not as man seeth, but looketh upon the heart. From a principle of obedience and love every redeemed sinner gives an offering to the Lord. While this method cherishes the best feelings towards God our Savior, and towards his people and cause, it does, at the same time, lie at the basis of all that is needful by way of contribution.

"For a moment think of the power which the mighty Saviour can call into action on this principle. Suppose a church of two hundred and fifty members. Let every one be poor, and every one lay by only the widow's two mites, which make a farthing. One cent a week from two hundred and fifty Christians, will amount in a year, to at least one hundred and twenty— five dollars! Is not the Divine Method one of great power? How vast the sum from a million of Christians!—from a million of poor Christians! Not less than five hundred thousand dollars!

"But this is by no means the divine standard of contribution. It is only the frequency and universality that we have yet considered. And far be it from us to intimate that the rich are to contribute no more than the poor. Such is by no means the Divine Method."

The foregoing is certainly as ingenious a sophism on the subject as any that has ever fallen under our observation. And as it embraces the substance of all the arguments for raising money for missionary purposes, we feel disposed to lay the scripture, from which such deductions are drawn, before the reader, that he may see the contrast and draw his own inferences. The following is about every thing in the New Testament bearing on this subject:

"And in these days came prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch. And there stood up one of them named Agabus, and signified by the Spirit, that there should be a great dearth throughout all the world; which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar. Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judea: Which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.—Acts xi: 27, 30.

"But now I go to Jerusalem, to minister unto the saints. For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem. It hath pleased them verily; and their debtors they are. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things.—Rom. xv: 25, 27.

"Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week, let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come. And when I come, whomsoever ye shall approve by your letters, them will I send to bring your liberality unto Jerusalem. And if it be meet that I go also, they shall go with me.— 1 Cor. xvi: 1, 4.

"Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia: How that, in a great trial of affliction, the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality. For to their power, (I bear record,) yea, and beyond their power, they were willing of themselves: Praying us with much entreaty that we would receive the gift, and take upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints.—2 Cor. viii: 1, 4.

"For as touching the ministering to the saints, it is superfluous for me to write to you. For I know the forwardness of your mind, for which I boast of you to them of Macedonia, that Achaia was ready a year ago; and your zeal hath provoked very many. Yet have I sent the brethren, lest our boasting of you should be in vain in this behalf; that, as I said, ye may be ready: Lest haply if they of Macedonia come with me, and find you unprepared, we (that we say not you) should be ashamed in

this same confident boasting. Therefore, I thought it necessary to exhort the brethren, that they would go before unto you, and make up before hand your bounty, whereof ye had notice before, that the same might be ready, as a matter of bounty, and not as of coveteousness. But this I say, he which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully, shall reap bountifully. Every man according as he purposeth in his own heart, so let him give; not grudgingly or of necessity, for God loveth a cheerful giver.—2 Cor. ix: 1, 7."

If the reader can see any authority in the foregoing quotations from the New Testament for begging money in the name of the Lord, to send the Gospel to the heathen, his perception is much keener than ours. Indeed, the very reverse is taught, in the quotation from Romans, as a duty. "For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things." The only object set forth in the collecting of these contributions, was to supply the necessity of the saints—but the missionaries have reversed the rule, and beg money for the heathen. Paul calls it ministering to the saints—but the missionaries minister to the heathen. Paul instructed the churches for each member to lay by him in store upon the first day of the week—but the missionary rule is to contribute money every Sunday. Paul encouraged the collection of contributions for a specific purpose—but the missionaries for every purpose which their vain and fruitful imaginations, can invent and call benevolent. Paul's object was to minister to the saints in carnal things—but the missionaries, is to minister to the heathen in spiritual things. The Apostolic purpose was to save the saints from starving— but the missionary purpose is to save the heathen from perdition. The Apostle calls the contribution carnal things —but the missionaries call it the power of Christ. "For a moment, say they, think of the power which the mighty Saviour can call into action on this principle."

For the purpose of accumulating the power here alluded to, many plans are put in operation. One is to send out begging agents, and give them a certain per cent on all they can obtain. Another is to have missionary sermons preached on stated occasions; when the most skillful sophist is selected, to play upon the sympathies of the people, and obtain money under false pretenses. On these occasions it is usual for the speaker to represent the heathen as crying for help to save them from perdition.

But We have given ample testimony to show, that, instead of this, they cry as an oppressed people, against the tyranny of the anti-Christian crusaders.

We might here with propriety say, that there is not one instance, by precept or example, to be found in the New Testament, of taking up a contribution for sending the Gospel from one country to another. But on the contrary it is positively forbid. The only rule ever laid down by Christ or his Apostles for this purpose is, "Provide neither gold nor silver, nor brass in your purses; nor scrip for your journey, &c, for the laborer is worthy of his hire, &c. And into whatsoever city ye enter, and they receive you, eat such things as are set before you, &c. But into whatsoever city ye enter, and they receive you not, go your ways out into the streets of the same, and say: even the very dust of your city which cleaveth on us, we do wipe off against you."

But the missionaries, though they profess to know God, yet in works they deny him. They set at naught the rules and regulations laid down by the King of Zion, and practice plans invented by their own evil imaginations. Instead of contributing to the necessities of the poor, as the Lord has commanded, they would beg from them their last cent, and then brag behind the curtain of their success— thus glorying in their own shame. This they do under the pretense of enforcing Christian duty; and though they have no scripture authority for such conduct, yet they are enabled to lead "silly women" astray, and consequently the men, through the influence of a pious conclave associated together in one common cause. They make merchandize of the people, under false pretenses, by first corrupting public opinion on the subject, and then bringing it to bear upon them—thus forcing them to give, merely to avoid censure. And this is all done in the name of the Lord; and that too for the avowed purpose of saving the heathen from perdition.

But it would be easy to prove, by a fair mode of reasoning, that, though they may have an outside accumulating faith on the subject, yet, they have not an internal conscientious faith. The manner and purposes for which they spend money is alone ample proof on this subject. The disbursing of missionary funds among the officers and agents has been a source of loud complaint by those who support the cause. The following from the Boston Investigator, will somewhat illustrate the views and objects of the missionary leaders who live in the large cities, and control the funds:

"We never had any doubt but there were some who supported religion from the best motives; but we believe that many support it with about the same object in view that the multitude had when they followed Jesus—namely, for 'the loaves and fishes.' This making a trade of religion is a shocking evil. We find tract societies established; charitable institutions set on foot; new plans devised to meliorate our condition: new buildings erected; new laws devised; new improvements suggested; and when we follow them up and see them organized, we shall find the pious,

humane, and totally disinterested projectors filling the lucrative places of presidents, scribes, agents, clerks, printers, &c.—a son here, a brother there, and religion is made to answer the purpose of private gain, under the specious pretext of public good.

"As an instance in point, the 'Missionary House' in this city pays four secretaries a salary of six thousand yearly; and out of more than ten thousand dollars raised the last year by the Foreign Evangelical Society, not less than six thousand were expended in agencies, &c. This is the principle upon which religious teachers, as a class, conduct their performances. They labor for money just as much as the mechanic who builds a house or a ship. The only difference is, the missionaries are not half as honest as the mechanic, inasmuch as they pretend not to work for money, which in fact amounts to a system of cheating, or, as they say in law, 'obtaining goods under false pretences.'

"Society requires reform, there is no doubt, but it cannot be effected by these money—making, pious schemers. It must be done by precept and example, by justice, generosity, mild persuasion, disinterested benevolence, unmitigated love and kindness, and not got up under the shape of contributions for missionaries, tract societies, &c.

"On every side we perceive new schemes to obtain money for religious purposes—converting the heathen, sending missionaries abroad, building churches, holding religious fairs, buying up theatres for purposes of pious speculation, establishing pious newspapers, &c.

"These sums which could be converted to objects of charity, to feed the hungry, and clothe the naked are taken from those who cannot afford them, to constitute a fund which is to be expended under the superintendance of certain men. The annual amount raised for such purposes in this country is immense, and we are feeling the force of it, not in substantial and wholesome reforms, but in the meddling interference in private concerns—invading the sanctity of domestic retirement, and attempting to hold public opinion and public will in a thralldom almost as oppressive as the inquisition itself. We are told that this is all for real goodness and sincere piety; and he who objects to it is no friend of benevolence and true religion. Let us beware of fanaticism, of bigotry, and intolerance; they are the curses of human society; and always assume some plausible shape to deceive and beguile. Men do not always practice as they preach; and when we see profit introduced under the panoply of spiritual guides, we can see no grounds for

believing that a system of religion which thus encourages hypocrisy is of any utility in promoting human happiness."

Again we quote from the Portland Boat, published in the State of Maine, viz:

"The pews in Calvary Church, New York, were lately sold at auction for forty thousand dollars; and it is said that the society, in addition to a salary of five thousand dollars per year, has given its Rector fifteen thousand dollars, furnished a parsonage house, and insured his life to the amount of ten thousand dollars!

"This church is rightly named: it was at Mount Calvary that the body of Christ was crucified; and at this New York Calvary, this mountain of pride and sin, he is 'crucified afresh and put to open shame.' Just think of Christ with a little band of humble fishermen, going up and down the world doing good, without where to lay his head, preaching from fishing boats, among the poor, the sick and the afflicted, gathering grain and rubbing it out of the chaff with his hands to appease his hunger; eating with the poor, tarrying at night with those most despised of the world; without popularity, despised, hated, reviled, persecuted; without salary, asking none, yet continuing to do good even to his enemies; and in his last breath asking forgiveness for those who nailed him to the tree. Just think of Him and His humble course, through poverty and abuse, and then think of the Right

Rev. Dr. H, of New York—a professed disciple of this lowly Master—in his forty thousand dollar church, with a present of fifteen thousand dollars in his pocket, and a yearly salary of five thousand more! with his life insured to the amount of ten thousand. Verily, if this be the religion of Jesus, it has wonderfully changed since first preached on the mountains, and by the sea side, eighteen hundred years ago.

"A forty thousand dollar church built with money gained by buckling, cheating, lying, grinding the face of the poor, robbing the widows and the fatherless! A fifteen thousand dollar present, and a five thousand dollar salary, the money gained by the same means! Now, who is there in this broad nation that does not know that such a religion must be a curse, and nothing else but a curse, to all concerned? Who has not sense enough to see that this is as directly opposite to the religion of Jesus as darkness is to light? and yet, my friends, whether you will believe it or not, this church is no worse at heart than nearly all other churches in the land; but give them the means, and small is the number of such as would not wander just as far from the truth, and be just as ready to crucify Christ afresh, and put him to open shame.

"It is surprising that there are infidels in the world, and that the number increases, while the professed follower of the meek and lowly Jesus manifested such monstrous hypocrisy?"

Is it possible that these people, who make such a lavish expenditure of money, for such purposes, do, in the sincerity of their hearts, believe that that money could have been made instrumental in saving souls from perdition? If so, do they not act grossly, yea, fiendishly inconsistent with their faith? Yet saving the heathen from perdition is the theme of all these missionary denominations, and begging money as a power to accomplish this end! Yea, they would beg the last dime from the poor and needy, who, according to the letter and spirit of the gospel, should be objects of their charity. And when thus blasphemously obtained in the name of the Lord, for unwarranted purposes, it is huddled together in large sums to be disposed of by certain men in our large cities.