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*The
Kingdom
Without
Frontiers*

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"The Kingdom Without Frontiers"

IN prophesying the birth of Jesus the angel Gabriel said, "Of his kingdom there shall be no end." One of the modern versions gives this translation, "His kingdom shall have no frontier." No man shall ever be able to draw a line across any part of the earth's surface and say, "Here is the permanent boundary of the Kingdom of Christ." It will always be a moving boundary, marking an ever-enlarging empire, looking to the time when the kingdoms of this world shall have become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ.

The Daring Command

It was a daring command which Jesus gave when he looked into the faces of his disciples and said, "Go ye, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations." The audacity of such a command is apparent when we think of the mighty forces of opposition and the meager human resources of these disciples. It would have been strange enough if he had commanded them to evangelize Jerusalem, for that City was bitter in its hostility. Far more surprising would have been the command to bring all Judaea under the dominion of the Master. It must have seemed sheer madness to command these few humble men to climb over the middle wall of partition and conquer Samaritan hatred and prejudice. What must have been the feelings of these disciples, then, when Jesus calmly commanded them to go and "make disciples of all the nations"! Surely they must have looked at him in wonder and perplexity.

Then came the reassuring promise, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world," and immediately all was changed. The task was no longer impossible. The command seemed perfectly reasonable. If Jesus would go with them, they would go anywhere and undertake anything. In obedience

to his command, and in the inspiration of his assured presence, these men went out and turned the world upside down. Within the comparatively short period of three hundred years, they brought the proud Roman Empire to the door of the church suing for an alliance.

The Kingdom of Christ

"Our citizenship is in heaven," said Paul in writing to the Philippian Church. He used a figure familiar to these citizens of Philippi, who were themselves citizens of Rome. Their city was established as a part of the Roman policy of colonization. The purpose of the Roman colony was to defend the borders and extend the bounds of the empire. Citizens of the colony had their names enrolled in the "Eternal City." They enjoyed the peculiar privileges of Roman citizenship and gave their loyal allegiance to the emperor.

The purpose of the church is to extend the boundary of the kingdom of Christ, to enlarge the sphere of its influence, to train its members in the duties of heavenly citizenship. This was the origin of the New Testament churches. The churches at Antioch, Ephesus, Philippi, Corinth and Thessalonica were established as centers from which the gospel message could be sent to the regions beyond. Our churches of today are the product of missions. The best that we enjoy in modern civilization, as well as the richer blessings of our spiritual life, are due to the fact that the voice which Paul heard at Troas was a summons to Europe, from whence the Gospel came in due time to America. If Paul had turned his face in the other direction, we would be sitting in darkness today, waiting upon the result of an academic discussion among the peoples of the Old World as to whether the foreign mission enterprise is worth the effort! As the products of missions, we are inevitably bound up with the world program of Christ.

My Church and the Kingdom

My church is not the Kingdom of Christ. It has no saving power and no monopoly on the Kingdom. One may be inside the church and, at the same time, be outside of the Kingdom. There is much outside of my church which is a part of the Kingdom. There is much outside of my denomination, indeed, outside of all the churches, which is a part of the Kingdom. The reign of Christ in the hearts and lives of men is something more immediate and more vital than any ecclesiastical connection. If we are wise, and if we fully share the Master's spirit, we will recognize that there are many who "follow not after us," but who do follow Him and whom he does acknowledge as belonging to his fold.

My Church Has a Program

But let it be said that my church does have a program. Aside from its local ministry, it is affiliated with other churches in a co-operative enterprise to promote the interests of Christ's Kingdom. This world program includes missionary endeavor in Virginia, in the South, and in fourteen foreign countries, where devoted missionaries tell the Gospel story and depend upon the Virginia Baptist churches for financial support. It includes an educational enterprise with schools and colleges in Virginia for the secondary and higher education of young men and women, theological Seminaries in the South for the training of preachers, and training schools for missionaries who go out to the various home and foreign fields. It includes an extensive benevolent work with orphanages and hospitals in the several States. It includes a great publishing business which furnishes books, periodicals and pamphlets for the spread of the Gospel. It includes the support of an army of field workers for the enlistment and training of our own people.

Thinking of my church in its relation to this Baptist program, I would recognize three clear calls:

Need for Denominational Loyalty

Such loyalty is not necessarily "narrow." It is no narrower than the individual Baptist—and no Bap-

tist should be narrow. Such loyalty is not incompatible with the broadest sympathy and the fullest cooperation with all the enterprises outside which promote the interests of Christ's Kingdom. Entirely in harmony with that broader outlook, we need to cultivate a peculiar sense of responsibility toward those enterprises which are our particular responsibility. From my childhood days in a preacher's home, I recall how the occasional visit to our church of Dr. R. J. Willingham of the Foreign Mission Board, or Dr. B. D. Gray of the Home Mission Board, or the Secretary of our State Mission Board was recognized as an event of more than ordinary importance. At the breakfast table on Sunday morning my father would say: "We will all be in our places at church on time today. The Secretary of our Foreign Mission Board is to be a visitor in our church today." The children went to church that day in a spirit of anticipation. We felt a sense of pride and responsibility as the hosts of "our" secretary.

It is not always so today. We have as great men in the leadership of the denominational work as in the days of old, but we do not accord them the same respect. Sometimes when the State Secretary or the secretary of one of our mission boards speaks at the morning service, a prominent layman will come to the pastor and ask: "Who is that fellow?" The man of God who is called by his brethren to a place of great burden and responsibility, and who should be known affectionately as "Our Secretary," is simply "that fellow" to the layman. "Tell it not in Gath," but, if the layman had known that one of the secretaries would be the speaker that day, he probably would have been absent from the service. Important business would have taken him out of town for the week-end.

Need of Conviction Regarding Stewardship

We must emphasize the vital importance of practicing Christian stewardship as a means of growth in grace. To confine ourselves to an appeal for needy causes is to lay the foundation too narrow. The Christian should regularly contribute a proportionate part of his income to the support of the king-

dom because of his love for Christ. He should be made to realize that such giving is a natural and essential expression of the inward spiritual life. So much is this true that, if the time should come when the church has no program where the contribution could be used in promoting kingdom interests, it would be necessary to find some agency outside of the church that could wisely use the contribution. Only by the development of such deep conviction will we ever raise our contributions to the level where they ought to be.

Appeal of the Causes

Having said the above, we may now say that the objects included in the Co-operative Program do present a strong and impelling appeal. We must tell the story of our world missionary program, of our schools and colleges and seminaries, of our hospitals and orphanages, and let that message make its appeal to our people. We have investments to offer which yield the largest dividends on earth.

In the corner of the church yard in my native town of Washington, Georgia, is the grave of a good woman who made such an investment. This Gentile widow of a prosperous Jew married Jesse Mercer, the leading Georgia Baptist of his time. It was the money left by this Jew which Dr. and Mrs. Jesse Mercer contributed to the founding of Mercer University. After his graduation from Mercer University a brilliant young peacher named Trion went as a missionary to the then republic of Texas and became one of the founders of Baylor University. The story is told that when Col. Baylor was dictating to the young Trion the charter of the university he said, "The name of this institution shall be Trion University." The young amanuensis changed one word and wrote "Baylor University." Thus the great Baptist school of Texas received its name. Out from that institution in the course of the years went the men and women who laid the foundation for our Baptist empire in the great Southwest. Under the inspiration of these Baylor graduates the Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary was launched upon its ministry of train-

ing the preachers and missionaries who have carried the Gospel message around the world. When the great leader, Dr. B. H. Carroll, rested from his labors, Dr. L. R. Scarboro became president. In 1918 Southern Baptists summoned Dr. Scarboro to Nashville to lead our forces in the Seventy-Five Million Campaign to pay the debts on Baylor, Mercer and the other Baptist institutions throughout the South. As a senior at Mercer University I sat in the historic chapel hall and listened as Dr. Scarboro told the story of that good woman, whose body lies buried yonder in the church yard of my native town, how God took her contribution and used it to set in motion the influences that have girdled the globe with their blessed ministry.

We must tell the story of such investments which are possible today.