

The
Universal Conversion
of
The World

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These words contain the great, exact and complete promise, based upon a single and only causative condition. If that single condition be fulfilled the effect will most surely follow.

Observe that the single condition necessary to the conversion of the world is that Christ be "lifted up." This condition has been partly, and must yet be completely, finished by men. Until then the result will not, indeed cannot, be reached; hence the supreme importance of knowing just what is meant by His being "lifted up." We believe there has been a gross misunderstanding of this verse; and this prompts us to offer the following explanation of it.

THE FIRST STEP

First, let us briefly note in this connection that nineteen hundred years of evangelistic effort have brought the world perhaps no nearer (numerically) to the acceptance of Christ than it was at the end of the second century. Indeed Christianity is scarcely holding its own in some so-called Christian lands. Some countries once well evangelized have largely relapsed to heathenism. Buddhism, Brahminism and Confucianism remain almost intact in their opposition to and contempt for Christ. One-seventh of the world's population is steeped in Mohammedanism. Even Palestine, the ancient homestead of the Christian faith, is occupied by its enemies, the Turks.

New York City contains over eleven hundred thousand people utterly without affiliation with Christian churches of any sort. In London, the largest city of Christendom, before the war, less than one in ten of its people were church-goers; and London has had the Gospel for a thousand years.

On a Sabbath some time prior to the breaking out of the present war it was ascertained that in the great, so-called Protestant city, Berlin, less than one in one hundred and thirty of the people attended church.

Does it not certainly seem that the world will never be converted by present methods? Space permitting, we believe we could show why it cannot be. In fact, that glad culmination awaits the fulfilling of that one condition above referred to. What is it? What does the "lifting up" of Christ mean? Was it a single act like the crucifixion? Or on the other hand was it a series of acts, a continuing process? Let us see.

No one goes further than we in reverential awe for the atonement which Christ made when he was lifted up on the cross of Calvary. That sacrifice was infinite, perfect, complete, so complete that it will never have to be repeated. His was the one perfect atoning sacrifice. To quote again the apostle John:

"He is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the whole world." 1 John 2:2. And to quote Paul:

"God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself." 2 Cor. 5:19.

But the sacrifice which Christ made upon the cross was by no means all that he accomplished or will accomplish toward the conversion and salvation of the world. The cross was indeed but the ladder by which he began an endless ascent toward a great ultimate goal, one infinitely higher than any instrument of death ever reached. Important as the cross is it is not the most important. It was, so to speak, the "foundation" of His great plan for the

regeneration of the world. It is true that "other foundation can no man lay," yet a foundation is of little value without the superstructure.

In a word, **the cross requires a benefitting crown above it to prevent it from giving a wrong interpretation of Christ's great ultimate purpose.** The cross is efficient, but not sufficient for the evangelization of the world.

If proofs of this were needed it might be pointed out that while Christ was indeed "lifted up" on the cross, and while that "cross" has been widely and diligently preached all these nineteen centuries, all men have not been actually drawn unto him; nor is there in the history of progress of modern evangelization any indication whatever that all men will be so drawn by this means alone.

The first step or stage in the lifting up of Christ was accomplished through the instrumentality of men, and by wicked men at that. So likewise the other successive steps in the series will also be effected through the instrumentality of men, but by men co-operating with and guided by the Holy Spirit. No other kind of men could if they would, or would if they could.

The succeeding steps in this continuing process of being "lifted up" were, or are, to be at once Christ's reward for enduring that cross and **the unfailing means of making that cross effective in the saving of the world.**

THE SECOND STEP

This is the lifting up of Christ on the love, faith and confidence of men by proclaiming his love to them—the love which forced him to his death. The partial failure which has resulted is due to the fact that only a partial Gospel has been proclaimed. The drawing power of the cross is great, yet it has not proved great enough to draw all men unto him.

Let us now turn to John 3:14 and 15 and read what Christ has to say further on the subject of His being "lifted up."

"And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness even so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth may in him have eternal life."

The piece of metal which Moses elevated upon a standard was not a sacrifice, nor even a propitiation for sin. On the contrary it was for substance a means of faith and belief to the on-lookers. It merely betokened and visualized the offered mercy of God. It was not intended as an object of worship, as Christ is. Hundreds of years afterwards such worship of it led the people into idolatry. This wrong use of it finds a present day parallel in making the cross of Christ an object of veneration.

In many cathedrals of both the Old and the New world pieces of wood, brazenly asserted to be parts of "the original true cross," are enshrined for the reverent adoration of the credulous devotee. It is in fact the fetichism, the "nehushtan" of Christianity. The distinction between the worship of such an emblem and idolatry is so fine that one cannot see it.

In these and other ways the cross has come to be erroneously looked upon as the one great, all-inclusive, symbol of Christianity and its one supreme distinctive expression. It was in fact, however, a part of his humiliation, not his glorification, as is often preached. But neither the cross nor the preaching

Let us get the truth squarely before us that Christ's great ultimate purpose in coming into the "far country" of this world was to obtain for himself a kingdom. The world, even the Christian world, refuses it to him. The world at large does not yet recognize Christ simply because he has not been lifted up to his rightful place of actual authority and potent control by his witnesses. His followers have not claimed it for him. They refuse or neglect to testify for him before the world. "We will not have this man to reign over us." The Christian nations of the world are at each others throats because they "have no king but Caesar."

CONCLUSION

Christ's errand to the "far country" of this world was not primarily the saving of souls, but the obtaining of a glorious kingdom for himself. God's glory, not man's good, comes first—Scripturally, logically, effectively. The saving of souls with which to people that kingdom was and is necessary, yet secondary.

The Gospel offer is often presented as though there is but one party to be benefitted, namely, the saved. We are prone to forget that the glory of God is of more moment to him than anything else.

Christ must be lifted up before he can draw the world up. The promise is not that he will **push the world up ahead of him** or that evangelists will be able to push or coax men into the kingdom. An uncrowned king may command a certain amount of respect and honor from the few; as David before his coronation, but he has little power. We of democratic America pretend to despise royalty and to some extent we do hold in contempt the king-craft of the old world; yet let the veriest rake of Europe, if he be only descended from one of its reigning houses, come to our shores and the populace turns out enmasse to do him honor. Why? Simply because it is natural and human to do so. Now let the only Potentate, the King of kings and the Lord of lords, be given his royal prerogatives and the majesty of his person will call the populace of the world to his chariot wheels, enmasse.

The crying need of the hour therefore is a concerted effort on the part of all Christians who have caught the vision, to have the Lord the Spirit placed in control of the affairs of the world. If the beginning were once well made the movement would grow. The world is waiting, ready, expectant, eager. It needs to be led, to be told how to go about it. The stone cut out of the mountain grew till it filled the whole earth. That "stone" of Daniel's prophecy stands for the kingdom of Christ. All things are thus due to be put under him and the unbreakable oath of Almighty God pledges that this shall be done. Such a movement therefore cannot fail. Christ himself has promised that if he be thus "lifted up" and honored he will, as a sure and eternal reward, **draw all men unto himself.**