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Doctrinal Theology.

BIBLIOLOGY.

(Continued.)

The Author of the Bible is God; not man under God; not man and God; but simply God. The Old Testament Scriptures are "the oracles of *God*."¹⁾ What Moses said in the Pentateuch was "the word of *God*."²⁾ The words of the Psalmist are words which "the *Holy Ghost* saith."³⁾ By that which is written in Jeremiah, the Prophet, "the *Holy Ghost* is a witness to us."⁴⁾ The things that Paul, the Apostle, writes to the Corinthians, "are the commandments of the *Lord*,"⁵⁾ even as what Isaiah wrote was spoken *by* the prophet, but "*of* the *Lord*,"⁶⁾ and *by* the mouth of His servant David, the *Lord God* said what we read in the Psalm.⁷⁾ In short, every part of Scripture is the *word of God* and can not be broken;⁸⁾ and "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God,"⁹⁾ not certain parts of Scripture, of

1) Rom. 3, 2.

2) Mark 7, 10. 13.

3) Heb. 3, 7. coll. Ps. 95, 7. 8.

4) Heb. 10, 15. 16. Cf. Jer. 31, 33. f.

5) 1 Cor. 14, 37.

6) Matt. 1, 22: τὸ ῥηθὲν ἐπὶ κυρίου διὰ τοῦ προφήτου. Cf. Is. 7, 14.

7) Acts 4, 24 f. coll. Ps. 2, 1. 2.

8) John 10, 34. 35. coll. Ps. 82, 6.

9) 2 Tim. 3, 16.

The Pulpit.

CHRISTIAN MISSIONS.

TEXT: "*Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field: which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof. Another parable spake he unto them: The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.*" Matt. 13, 31—33.

"God loveth a cheerful giver," St. Paul writes to the Corinthians. A Christian should give as the Lord has prospered him, and what he gives he should give cheerfully. The rich of their abundance should give abundantly, and the poor of their poverty should give gladly. Neither should the rich think themselves more and better because they give much, nor should the poor be ashamed because they can give but little; for it is the Lord that maketh rich and maketh poor.

In order to give cheerfully, a Christian ought to be, and indeed to some extent he must be acquainted with the object for which his gifts are solicited. Indiscriminate giving may do more harm than good. A Christian should know that the object for which he gives is good. He must never sanction that which is wrong by promoting it with his gifts. A true Lutheran cannot conscientiously contribute toward the building of a church in which unscriptural doctrines and the wisdom of man will be preached; neither may he aid in founding and supporting a sectarian seminary, nor should he give for an unnecessary and unfruitful undertaking. Therefore we find in the eighth and ninth chapters of St. Paul's second epistle to the Corinthians

that the apostle when soliciting aid for the poor brethren at Jerusalem did not only call on the Christians in Greece and Macedonia to give, but he also stated the object for which and the reasons why they should give, and he also instructed them on the right manner of giving. When the Christian gives he should give both cheerfully and intelligently.

Now as a collection for Home Mission has been announced for this meeting, and some of you may ask, why should we give toward carrying on this work of Mission, let me to-day propose the question:

WHY SHOULD CHRISTIANS CHEERFULLY CONTRIBUTE
TOWARD THE WORK OF MISSIONS?

From the text read we gather the twofold answer:

- I. *Because it is in the Nature of Christ's Kingdom to expand and enlarge its Bounds, and*
- II. *Because Missions in the Distance are a Blessing to the Church at Home.*

I.

The two parables contained in our text both refer to the growth of the kingdom of God, but in different ways. The first, the parable of the mustard seed, describes the outward growth of the church. The Gospel of Christ conquers heart after heart, invades city after city, and nation after nation, and so the church is continually spreading abroad over the face of the earth. The second, the parable of the leaven, refers more to the growth of the inner man in the individual Christian, and hence also to the growth of the spiritual life in any local church or congregation. And purposely did I take both parables together. The first is this:

"The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field:

which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof."

If we place a grain of corn and a mustard seed side by side it shows what a diminutive little thing the mustard seed is, and judging by the size of both grains one would think that the grain of corn would produce a plant many times larger than the mustard seed. But in fact it is not so. All things being favorable, the mustard seed will bring forth a plant taller than a tall man, and it will put out branches and will spread like a tree that indeed the birds of the air can lodge and even build in it. Plant a mustard seed which you can scarcely feel between the fingers in a favorable spot, and after three months you will find it a tree branching out and covering quite a parcel of ground, that no other herb plant can equal it in size.

As God in natural things makes great things out of the small, so also in spiritual things.

The Word which Christ preached was not pleasing to the Jews and it was but a handful of disciples whose faith failed not when He had poured out His soul unto death. But when that handful of uneducated men were endowed with power from on high and went forth to execute the command: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature," then this new plant began to grow, and to this day it has uninterruptedly continued to strike its roots deeper and to spread its branches wider from age to age. The resources of Rome, the mightiest empire that ever existed on earth, were exhausted to extirpate the kingdom of Christ, but the Cesars with all their power could not even stop its growth. Antichrist set the Gospel, the seed from which the church springs, under a bushel; but notwithstanding all his craftiness and cruelty he could not keep it there, it had to come forth again, to be preached to all nations and kindreds and tongues and

peoples, and now the church of Jesus Christ is become a mighty tree spreading its branches over all lands and extending even to the uttermost isles of the sea. In the 80th Psalm Asaph sings of the vine which the Lord brought forth out of Egypt: "The hills were covered with the shadow of it, and the boughs thereof were like the goodly cedars. She sent out her boughs unto the sea, and her branches unto the river." But the church of the New Testament has made the stakes of her tent far wider. Of her we must say: She came forth from Zion in the land of Judah and she has encircled the round of the heavens. There is no people nor nation where the voice of her Bridegroom is not heard.

And what we behold in the church at large is continually being repeated in certain lands and localities. Our Evangelical Lutheran church was planted in this western land by little bands of Christians, some of whom had been driven from their native country for the Gospel's sake. They were thankful to God for now being free to worship Him according to His Word, and they dreamed of no great deeds. But God was with them and He soon caused them to enlarge their tents, and now the orthodox church of the Reformation is a power in the land, a tree stretching its branches from sea to sea.

This is the nature of Christ's kingdom; it grows, expands, enlarges; it is aggressive and is continually encroaching on the kingdom of Satan. The Word of Christ contains a germ of life and activity which will not suffer it to lie idle. It runs from place to place making conquest after conquest, as the Psalm says: "His word runneth very swiftly." The Gospel is the word of invitation to the marriage of the Lamb; it is sent forth that the marriage hall might be filled, and He that sends it will not be foiled. If it is not received at one place He sends it to another. If the dwellers on the avenues decline He sends His servants to proclaim it in the alleys and to invite them that

roam on the highways. This Word will run the rounds of the four winds until the Father's house is filled. And not by angel hands is it disseminated. Sinners who have embraced it are filled with the desire that others too might be granted the bliss to taste of its sweetness and it prompts them to do what they can that this saving Word may be brought unto those who have it not. In its very nature the Gospel is a missionary word and the true church of Christ; the community of saints, is in fact a mission society. If the church were at all times so filled and actuated by the Spirit of Christ as it ought to be it would do the work spontaneously, and specially organized mission societies would not at all be necessary. A Lutheran Christian should not rest content when he and his family are provided with the word of God in church and school. There is something lacking if a Lutheran congregation looks only after its own home affairs and does not think further than only to provide for its own needs. A Lutheran Christian must look beyond his own door sill; he must take interest in the growth of the church; he must have a heart for the promotion of the kingdom of God. He should ask: What can I do that the pure doctrine of the Gospel which God has so graciously granted me be brought to others also? Is there a door open, is there a truly Lutheran mission in which I can aid? Isaiah thus charges the church: "Lift up thine eyes round about and see: all they gather themselves together, they come to thee: thy sons shall come from far, and thy daughters shall be nursed at thy side." Our eyes should not be riveted to our home interests alone, our heart should be large enough to have a place for those that are afar off. When here a handful and there a sheaf is gathered in we should rejoice over the work of the Lord and we should say one to another: Come, let us unite our prayers and contribute our mites that more laborers may be sent into the harvest and that the everlasting barns may be filled.

But also in her mission work our Lutheran church preserves her character of being a truly conservative church. A Lutheran church is not like some fanatics who claim to be sent of God to preach everywhere. A true Lutheran will not be "a busybody in other men's matters." From the book of Acts we know that it is God who directs missionary work. Our Lutheran church, therefore, looks to see where a door is opened unto her, be it far or near, and she will put her hand to that work which is given her to do, and will always do that first which appears most necessary.

Now to our confessional Lutheran church in this country God has opened a great door, and He clearly shows us where our aid is sadly needed. In various parts of our country many of our brethren in the faith live scattered abroad, and living scattered, they are without the preaching of the Gospel, and their children grow up without instruction in the saving truth, unless missionaries are sent to travel over the country and in a measure at least to provide for them. And whose duty is it to come to the aid of such scattered Lutherans? It is certainly one of the first and most sacred duties of our Lutheran church to look after her own scattered children. Here we must not begin to say, people ought not to scatter out so far, and should not move to places where they can not have preaching and the Sacraments. There is some truth in this; but will it justify us in remaining idle and doing nothing for them? How does Christ the Savior do? If one of His fold has gone astray, will He fold His hands and say: It ought not to have gone astray? Nay, but He is up and doing to follow after that stray one and to win it back. Zealously should our church walk in His footprints and be ready to make sacrifices to supply men and means that the bread of life may be broken to her scattered children. It is a duty to send missionaries to the heathen; but to our American Lutheran church home mission work among her own starving children is surely the nearest and the most necessary.

II.

But let me hasten to say a word on the second parable in our text: "*The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.*"

While the Word of Christ is like a mustard seed producing a great and spreading plant, it is at the same time also a leaven which, when it has taken hold on a man, works and leavens the whole man and more and more makes him a new creature from heart, soul, mind and all his powers. Yet without entering in full on the merits of this beautiful comparison, let me here only ask: Why does the Lord connect these two parables together, the one treating of the external, the other of the internal growth of the church? Certainly because both stand in the most intimate relation, promote one another and in fact are in a measure dependent upon each other. It has already been mentioned, and this is a fact which history abundantly illustrates, that a church which is void of missionary spirit will also lack the proper zeal in behalf of the work of the kingdom of Christ at home, while, on the other hand, the children of the household will not be the worse for the willing hearts and open hands sending bread of life beyond the waters. Helping to build the kingdom of heaven in other regions reminds us of looking to the salvation of our own souls, lest we help others and ourselves become cast-aways. If we assist in sending the saving Word to those who crave it and have it not, we are exhorted ourselves to appreciate it the more. If we read of little success in a mission field it must remind us of our own hardness of heart, and if missionaries report of people traveling many miles to hear a sermon we must feel ashamed if we ourselves are often absent from the house of God when we might and should be there. When a Christian gives for a mission he is prompted to accompany the gift with a prayer;

for what is an offering without a blessing asked upon it? Where there is little or nothing to do, people become indolent; but where there is much to do, they are kept alive and active. A church which takes an active part in the interests of the church at large, chiefly in the spreading of the kingdom of God, thereby promotes its own spiritual growth and welfare. Jesus Christ would have His Gospel preached to every creature, and He will bless every Christian and every congregation enlisting in His service with heart and hand in the work of mission.

I trust it will now be plain to all that the object for which you are asked to give is a good and a necessary work, and that we are among those who have a duty in this work and who ought to take a deep interest in it, so that, whatever you choose to give, may be given intelligently and cheerfully. And now, brethren, let me remind you of the words of the Lord, saying: "Freely ye have received, freely give."

May the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Savior both of those that are near and those that are far, shed abroad His love in your hearts that you may abound in love. Amen.

F. K.

A GENERAL PRAYER

TO BE USED AT MISSION FESTIVALS AND SIMILAR OCCASIONS.

(Contributed.)

Almighty and everlasting God, our heavenly Father through Jesus Christ our Savior, we give Thee most humble and hearty thanks for the innumerable blessings, both temporal and spiritual, which, without any merit or worthiness in us, Thou hast bestowed upon us.

We praise Thee especially, that Thou hast preserved unto us in their purity the saving means of grace, Thy pre-