

God's Purpose in the Ages

by H.W. Everest

God's purpose in the ages is to bring about the triumph of the kingdom of Christ, which will be consummated through the progress of nature, human history, and the evolution of Christianity.

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 2:10

Topics: "Gods Purpose", "Christ Kingdom"

Description

H.W. Everest preaches about God's eternal purpose in the ages, emphasizing the mystery of His will revealed in Christ, the unification of all things in Him, and the consummation of this purpose. Despite human limitations in understanding God's infinite plan, revelation discloses His will and divine nature. The sermon explores manifestations of God's purpose in nature, human history, and the evolution of Christianity, highlighting the progress towards moral perfection and the triumph of Christ's kingdom. It concludes with the hope for the future consummation of God's purpose, the role of the church in fulfilling this purpose, and the need for reconsecration to Christ's service.

Transcript

"Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: that in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even him. "Eph. 1:9, 10.

HIS paper will be concerned with three questions: What is God's purpose in the ages? Can we trace manifestations of this purpose? How is this purpose to be consummated?

I. At first sight, it seems absurd that one should think to know the purpose of God in the ongoing of the ages. Man is finite, God is infinite. Man lives but a moment, God inhabits eternity. Man opens his eyes on but a small part of God's creation, while God's knowledge and purpose comprehend all things and run on through all eternities. Can man measure the thought of God? On a closer view, the difficulties are vastly increased and the solution of this problem by man is seen to be absolutely impossible. The data on which a correct conclusion might be founded are not [279] accessible. They are locked up in the infinite past and the infinite future. They include, not only what has been done, but what is yet to be done and what is as yet only in the thought of God. Moreover, the data from which the purpose of God might be inferred are not only inaccessible, but they are exceedingly complex. The scheme is a wheel within a wheel, and there is no end to the machinery, whether you go up to the revolving suns or down to the whirling atomic vortices. If man can not master the atom, how can he analyze and interpret the universe? Not only

complex, but contradictory: progress and retrogression; solar systems evolved from cosmical matter and then slowly falling into the central vortex; systems of life rising into being and others passing away; desert wastes and fertile fields, pleasure and pain, righteousness and sin, life and death. Who can analyze the facts? Who can reconcile the contradictions? Who can discover the underlying laws? Who can arrange all the facts under these laws, and see the far-away end toward which all the stars and all the ages are moving? How can man, who fails in the simplest case, reach this highest generalization of all? How can he discover what was first and last in the mind of God and what has been His purpose concerning man during all the ages?

Riding along the street, you look up and see, through a dust-covered window in the tenth story, the glinting of a revolving wheel, and this only; [280] would you venture to infer the character of the building, the articulations of the machinery, the nature of the product, and the ultimate purpose of the builder? So, in the brief lightning-flash of life, you but dimly see earth and sky, faces aglow with life and faces pale in death; you experience the fleeting thrills of thought and feeling, of victory and defeat, and from these can you rise to the thought and purpose of God? Earth is a prison of Chillon. We pace its stony floor, listen to the dashing waves, see through the grated window the changeful sky, and clank the chain by which we are bound. The prison itself testifies to the power and wisdom of Him who reared its massive walls; daily food given by an unseen hand testifies that He has a purpose concerning us; but the chain that binds us and the graves opening at our feet leave us in terrible doubt. The storm rages without, but our prison stands; suns rise, but they are quenched in the coming night; stars shine, but they look coldly in upon our misery; thunders roll, but they are not the voice of God and make no disclosure of His purpose. We are but

"Children crying in the night;

Children crying for the light;

And with no language but a cry;

and infinitely pathetic is our condition, if there is no Father in heaven to hear our cry and bring in the light.
[281]

But what man can not discover, God may disclose to him. Indeed, it is the province of revelation to make known what man can not learn in any other way; to give man that truth which is the key to the mysteries of nature and of providence. Hence an apostle could write the words which I have read to you: "Having made known unto us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself." We have Scriptures which were "given by inspiration of God." There were those who could truthfully say: "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love him; but God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit; for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God."

From these Living Oracles, then, we may learn what is God's purpose during all the ages. The analysis of this sublime oracle gives us the following facts: First, God has a high and holy purpose in man's creation and in all the centuries of human history. This world is not a result of fate nor a work of chance. It is not controlled by blind force nor ruled by malign spirits; but a God of infinite power, wisdom and love has a glorious purpose in it all. Second, this purpose is not an afterthought or an adjustment to unforeseen conditions; it was and is an eternal purpose. Third, this purpose originated in the mind and heart of [282] God. It is an expression of Himself, of the mystery of His will, of His good pleasure, of His divine nature. Fourth, this purpose has its manifestations, its limitations and its consummation in Christ. It was purposed

in Christ Jesus before the world began. Fifth, this grand, divine purpose, running through all the ages, is the unification of all things in Christ, of God and man, of earth and heaven. Sixth, the period when this summing up of all things in Christ shall be accomplished is the dispensation of the fullness of the ages, is the gospel dispensation, is the reign of Christ.

God's eternal purpose culminates in man, in man's moral perfection. This purpose will be realized when man shall be brought into harmony with God, when love shall hold universal sway, when righteousness shall cover the earth as the waters cover the surface of the great deep, when Christ shall have put down all rule and all authority and power, and when all men shall be united in Him. It is the purpose of God that the kingdom of Christ shall triumph, that the hour must come when every knee shall bow to Him and every tongue confess to God. All else is but a means to this end. It is toward this glorious consummation that all the ages have been toiling; for it must be that the right shall be victorious, that righteousness and truth shall be enthroned in earth and heaven. Than this purpose none could [283] be grander, none more consonant with reason, none more in harmony with our ideas of God, none more full of promise for the human race, and none more worthy of the struggling and rising ages.

II. Now, with the light of this revelation to guide our way, can we trace manifestations of this purpose? Can we see that nature and revelation are in perfect accord, and thus find a scientific basis and verification of our conclusion? In the great circle, the center of which is God's purpose, and the wide circumference of which is the consummation of this purpose, let us endeavor to trace out three radii of progress; viz., progress in nature, progress in human history, and progress in the evolution of Christianity. What God has done must be in harmony with His ultimate purpose. If we shall watch the divine Worker, we may see the material under His hand taking shape according to this purpose. If we shall see all lines of progress leading on to the accomplishment of one grand object, we must conclude that to accomplish this object has been the one all-comprehending purpose of God.

1. How is it with progress in nature? Has not the development and perfection of man been the goal toward which this progress has grandly moved during all the ages? From that first glimmer of light which shot through the primeval nebula, from the first appearance of life on through all material, biological and spiritual evolution, has [284] not man been the objective point and the crowning glory of the whole? Let us not be afraid of the word "evolution," as though it were the abode of an evil spirit. Let us cast out the demon; for there is a true evolution as well as a false one. Things do grow, there are gradations of organic forms, and nature has proceeded from the lower to the higher. But this evolution has not been without the wisdom and the power of God. Something was added to dead matter before it became a living plant; something more was added to the plant before it became a sensitive and moving animal; and infinitely more was added to the highest animal before it became a godlike man. There are chasms in this evolution so deep and wide that divine power alone can bridge them. Agassiz testifies that, from the appearance of the first paleozoic fishes, there was a constant approximation to man. The cephalic extremity was emphasized more and more. The vertebral axis continually approached the perpendicular, and some "cranks," political and religious, have gone so far as to lean the other way; there has been continual progress toward the higher intellectual and moral powers of man.

It is not a mere human conceit that man is the resultant of all lower forces and movements. It is not a mere conceit that without man nature would be meaningless and abortive; a foundation without a superstructure, a pedestal [285] without a statue, a body without a soul, a vast complication of forms and forces, and of science and skill, and yet without a purpose. Without man, the mineral world would have less meaning than an Egyptian pyramid buried in the desert sands. Without man, the organic world during

all the ages gone would have been climbing into the empty spaces only to fall back in cosmic dust. Without man, the embodiment of science and art in natural forms, the gleaming of divine thought from crystal and leaf, from flower and star, would have been useless, since it would have appealed to no corresponding intelligence, would have thrilled no immortal soul; all in vain the manifestations of beauty, the grandeur of the ocean, the sublimity of the mountains, and the glory of the sky. It was not till man appeared that the meaning of the whole could be seen, and not till then could all the sons of God have shouted for joy.

It is a sober and accepted demonstration of science that man is king over all terrestrial life, and that all things on the earth culminate and find their ultimate reason in him. The man of science finds many wonderful things: the microscopic world with its myriad forms; the telescopic universe with its innumerable suns and systems. He discovers mysterious and tremendous forces; he explains chemical and biological transformations; he describes many races of monsters that once tempested the oceans and roamed over the [286] continents; but, after all, the man of science himself is the most wonderful being in all the world. All other things are but his toys, his material, his servants. He alone can understand their nature and the laws under which they exist. He alone can think about them and be thrilled with their perfections.

Those professions which are occupied with the development and training of human beings are of the highest rank. Parents, teachers and pastors stand near to God. It would be a great thing if one could be the engineer of a Brooklyn bridge, the builder of a modern battleship, the author and finisher of an interoceanic canal, or the founder of an empire; but it is a greater thing to develop the men who do these things and who are capable of doing unspeakably more; men, who are not means to an end, but the end itself; men, immortal and eternally progressive. Evidently nature during all ages has been working out God's eternal purpose.

2. God's purpose to perfect man intellectually and morally is clearly seen in the trend of human history. Man is a rising, and not a setting, sun. The movement may be slow, but it is a movement and it is upward. There are times and countries which seem to indicate the contrary. There are monsters of crime and times of popular madness; French revolutions and Armenian massacres. One shore is sinking while another is rising; but when [287] you have balanced elevations and depressions, you will find that every century the whole continent of humanity is higher and higher.

The facts of historic progress are undeniable. There are natural stages through which a nation passes--savage, barbarous, half-civilized, civilized and enlightened. What progress in government, from despotism to free republics and limited monarchies! What progress in science! Time would fail me to tell the triumphs of a single science--of chemistry, or astronomy, or psychology. What progress in art! Every article of food and clothing, every ornament, every tool, every instrument of observation and research, work, travel, music, literature and law--all illustrate the same facts of material and social advancement.

The panorama of human progress, passing before us with the passing centuries, exhibits great contrasts, especially between the first and last scenes on the canvas. Here at the beginning we see the earth but sparsely inhabited. Men are fishing and hunting, living on the spontaneous productions of the earth, naked, or clothed in the skins of animals, and contending with wild beasts for the possession of the dens and caves of the hills. But the last picture is the most wonderful, though so familiar to us. The whole earth occupied; farms, roads and cities everywhere; trains gliding over the continents and steamships crossing the oceans; commerce supplying every nation [288] with the good things of every land; and millions of people occupied in the promotion of science and the education of the young.

There are some, however, who question man's progress in morals, and the fact that any one is so pessimistic as to raise this question does seem to favor their contention. But ancient nations were sunk so deep in moral corruption that they did not know it. Our trouble about the wrong and outrage with which the world is filled is proof, not that we are growing blacker, but that we are rising into the light where the blackness of human nature can be seen. The daily press exaggerates the evil by giving a disproportionate report of the evil and the good. We do not know how wicked the world has been. Did you ever read the Morning Chronicle published in Sodom in the days of Noah? or a copy of the Roman World of the reign of Nero? or the London Times when, in England, two hundred crimes were punishable with death? Read these relics of the times when the earth was filled with violence, before you pass pessimistic judgment on the men of the present. Never before was woman so pure, man so righteous, nor the reign of just law so perfect. Never before was there such compassion for the suffering, such care for the helpless, and such self-sacrifice for the undeserving and the criminal.

This historical progress has been under the guidance of Divine Providence. Every nation has [289] had its place in the procession of the ages, and its special work to perform. The ancient peoples--Hebrews, Chaldeans, Egyptians--laid the foundations of nationalities. The Greeks had a mission in behalf of art, oratory and literature. Rome gave the world lessons in law and lawlessness. The Germanic tribes stood for individual liberty and social equality, while it seems to be the work of the Anglo-Saxon race to bring the whole world under the sway of Christian civilization.

That this progress is working out the divine purpose, and is confirmatory of our conception of this purpose, is evident from the fact that this progress is the result of forces God implanted in the soul of man. God gave man's intellect, his wants, his desires, his conscience, his thirst for knowledge, his inventive genius and his power to lay all nature under contribution. Nor have these upward impulses spent their force. They have been gathering momentum during all the ages, and are energizing now as never before. The progress of the past and the velocity of our present advancement are prophetic of long and rapid marches toward the goal. All the centuries have been preparatory to the twentieth. We have the science, the instruments, the leisure, the wealth and the men; not a few men of genius only, as in former ages, but whole nations of educated people. We can avail ourselves of all the lasting results of human toil. We hold in our possession [290] principles and forces with which we can tunnel the everlasting hills and scale the vaulted skies. Man's progress is not an arithmetical, but a geometrical, series, and the ratio of this series is constantly increasing. All men who feel the throbbings of modern life are expecting great things in the near future. The future of human history, as well as the past, indicates God's purpose in the ages, and that we are sweeping on to its speedy and glorious accomplishment.

3. It is easy to trace manifestations of this purpose in the evolution of Christianity. He who does not see that Christianity is an evolution, and an evolution under the guiding hand of God; who does not see that it has a beginning, a progressive development and a consummation--can not understand the divine Book nor the religion taught therein. The Bible is not homogeneous from cover to cover, as some suppose. Like the crust of the earth, it is composed of many strata of truth--historic, moral and religious--deposited during many ages. The lowest stratum is the old Silurian of Genesis, holding the earliest appearance of life in the Edenic promise, and in the types of sacrifice and tabernacle. It has its Carboniferous, or Reptilian, age, with its rank growth of human institutions and its monsters of crime; with its many fossils of extinct species over which fossil theologians are wont to prophesy as did Ezekiel in the valley of dry bones. In the higher strata are still [291] clearer indications of coming eras in which the facts and principles of the true religion would be fully manifested. Then we have the eocene, the miocene and the pliocene of the New

Testament; the epochs of John the Baptist, of Christ, and of the apostles. We have the gospel in promise, in type, in prophecy and in fact. We hear a voice crying in the wilderness, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord." We listen to Him who spake as never man spake. We shudder in the darkness which shrouds the crucifixion from the sight of the angels. We stand on Mount Olivet and hear the risen Christ giving the great commission to His apostles: "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." We see the ascending Saviour and we gaze up into heaven till a cloud receives Him out of our sight.

And yet this religion was not then fully developed. Jesus only began to do and to teach; His apostles were to complete the work. Jesus left His blood on Mount Calvary, and His apostles in Jerusalem. He commanded them to wait till they were endued with power from on high. On Pentecost this power came. The descent of the Holy Spirit, like a telegram from the throne of God, announced the coronation of Christ and filled the apostles with divine knowledge and power. They at once began to carry out their commission, nor was this commission fulfilled and Christianity [292] fully revealed and confirmed till the last apostle had finished his course.

While Christianity is the product of a divine evolution, do not understand me as assuming that this evolution is still in progress. There are men who seem to think that Christianity is still in process of formation; who arrogate to themselves the authority of prophets and apostles, and who think to modernize it by adding somewhat and by subtracting a good deal. But Christianity is a completed system. Now for eighteen hundred years the heavens have kept silence, a silence not again to be broken till the trump of God shall sound and the dead shall rise. It is a revelation given once for all. It has in it nothing local or special; it is adapted to all ages and conditions; it needs no modification. Besides, there is no authority on earth to change it in the least respect; all who do it are usurpers and antichrists. Above the heads of those who dare to corrupt or attempt to improve what God has done may be heard the mutterings of the apostolic anathema: "Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." And the Bible, which gives this perfect system, is practically, to each one of us, an infallible book. If you know there are errors in it, however they have arisen, whether by translator, editor, copyist, amanuensis, or blundering apostle, such errors are [293] no part of the divine Word; and if you do not know these errors, you are not to assume that they exist. To the Bible as the only source of Christianity we all must come. He who is wise or foolish above or below what is written in these Living Oracles is a fanatic, a fool or a knave. But while Christianity is perfect, we are exceedingly imperfect, and wherever any one of us stands there is large room for progress. As the scientist could not think to improve or abolish the laws of nature, but only to ascertain these laws and conform to them, so it would be absurd for the theologian to think to make progress except in his knowledge and practice of the divine law.

We conclude, therefore, that progress in nature, in history and in revelation is a sublime manifestation of God's purpose concerning man.

III. Our third and last question has to do with the consummation of God's purpose. "Watchman, what of the night?" Are there signs that the morning cometh?

Who is not troubled by the long delay? Who does not cry out in the anguish of his soul, "How long, O Lord, how long!"? As the tragedy of sin goes on with its myriad forms of crime; with its contending armies and murdered millions; with plague, famine and oppression; with blasphemy, debauchery and death—who does not pray that the curtain may fall, and soon rise again on the millennial age? And yet, in the arithmetic of Heaven; [294] a thousand years are as one day and one day as a thousand years. Why was

the Creator so long in evolving the world and the various ranks of organic life? Why was science so long in coming? Why does God employ human agencies? Why did He not make all things stand forth in perfection at once? Why did He not make heaven only, leaving out of His plan hell, the devil, and a wicked world? When you have answered these questions, you will know why God's purpose has been delayed so long.

It may be said that it is not mere delay of which we complain. The map is black with heathenism. Thrice fifteen hundred millions go down to the grave every century, and not one-third of them ever heard of Christ. The answer to this objection is not complete, but it may silence our murmurings. God is just, and no wrong will eternal justice ever do to a single immortal soul. Our Father in heaven pitieth His children. We can trust the God who "so loved the world." Ignorance and consequent folly stir not His wrath, but His compassion and mercy. Still further, numbers are not a standard of value. Noah and his family were worth more, in God's plan, than all the world besides. Even if few, comparatively, are saved, redemption will not be a failure. But nowhere do the Scriptures teach that only a few will be saved. The vision of the apostle John was that of "a great multitude which no man [295] could number, out of every nation, and of all tribes and peoples and tongues." Besides, we are not to measure movements of the future by those of the past. There is a law of acceleration. A body falling to the sun from a great distance moves very slowly for ages, but very rapidly at the last. Whole nations may be converted in a day. The millennial age may be very long compared with the period of preparation; and so, at last, the lost may be to the saved as a drop to all the oceans, as a leaf to all the forests.

1. The present condition of the world is more favorable to this consummation than many suppose. Christendom comprises one third of the human race, and possesses more than three-fourths of the power, wealth and glory of the nations. The missionary army is very large: forty thousand in the foreign field; and at home many millions, for every Christian is a missionary of Jesus Christ. The controlling governments of the world are under the sway of Christian peoples.

But churches, colleges and Christian people are not all we have a right to claim. All science, all art, all invention, and the earth itself, improved in so many ways--cities, farms, roads, canals and mines--all these are ours, all are God's. The whole world of mankind is gradually approaching the kingdom of heaven, in morals, in social customs, in business honesty, in just laws, in hate of wrong, in benevolence, in Christian brotherhood. [296] When we feel these silent forces working in all departments of modern life, and when we see the whole world turning toward the Sun of righteousness, we may expect that it will soon be shining on all the nations in noontide splendor and power.

Indeed, it is a question whether the millennium has not already dawned upon us. This age is heaven compared with the hell of Nero's time, heaven compared with five hundred years ago. The world glided into the reign of Christ, but did not know it. And some men are so much inclined to look on the dark side that they will not know they are in heaven when they get there.

2. The providence of God may work mightily in bringing about the unification of all things in Christ. His purposes can not be thwarted, for to Him all things are possible.

"God moves in a mysterious way

His wonders to perform;

He plants His footsteps in the sea,

And rides upon the storm."

Queen Esther could not see how her people were to be saved from universal massacre, and yet it was done. We could not see how slavery was to be abolished, but God was marching on, and after the clouds of battle had rolled away, the sun of liberty and union shone out with unwonted splendor. So it may be in this case. Some remarkable advance of science, a more thorough [297] exploration of ancient lands, the conversion of the Hebrew race, or a conflict of nations which shall desolate the lands and crimson the seas, may furnish the opportune hour when God will intervene.

3. The progress of man in science, invention and social order will tend powerfully to bring in this auspicious period. Knowledge, art and social institutions are God's means for the accomplishment of His purposes as well as the gospel of Christ. Already we are lifting the curse of labor and getting back to the Garden of Eden and the tree of life. Thistles are mowed down with a self-binder, while briars and thorns are rooted out with steam-plows. Natural forces carry the heavy burdens and do the world's work. Science is constantly verifying Bible truth. Every precept of the Scriptures is found to be in harmony with mental and moral law. The gospel, as God's power to enlighten and save men, is exactly adapted to the intellect, the heart and the life of man, and the world is seeing this more and more. Commerce is bringing all nations into a brotherhood of industry and mutual dependence. Corporations and individuals dealing with one another from opposite sides of the ocean can not afford to be dishonest, and the time will come when all men will see that dishonesty and immorality do not pay. Christianity as it spreads throughout the earth will carry with it so many blessings of art [298] and social order, of health and life, that few will reject it. May we not hope that in the not distant future men will cease to slaughter one another in war; that arbitration will settle difficulties and not the carnage of battle? Have we not sense enough even now to see that this would be the better way? Will not the time soon come when all the treasures now expended on standing armies, navies and destructive wars will be spent in the arts of peace and in the work of saving men from barbarism and self-destruction? Then what rapid strides the nations will make toward that better era. Then men will see that Christianity is the only religion worthy of a civilized man, and the only hope of our race.

4. Even the enemies of Christianity are doing much to hasten its hour of triumph. Every attack brings out its defenders, and strengthens the weaker places in its walls. Every fifty years there comes a craze of infidelity, but the reaction is sure to follow. When the trainman puts his torch under the car and smites the wheels with his hammer, there is no danger that he will burn the train or demolish the wheels. It is well to find out whether any bolts are missing or any wheels broken. These so-called enemies are friends in disguise, pointing out the disarranged machinery and the unsafe men and the unsound articles of the creed, and still the train glides smoothly on nor falls behind its schedule time. [299]

So long as Christianity meets the great wants of the soul, so long it will not only endure, but go on from conquering unto conquest. Whatever may be said about the days of creation, about Jonah and the whale, about the interpretation of prophecy, the possibility of miracles, the doctrine of predestination, or about differences of ritual and government, still, so long as the Bible tells about our Father in heaven; so long as it gives peace to the troubled conscience and consolation to the breaking heart; so long as it gives a hope that is like an anchor to the soul sure and steadfast, and that reaches beyond the veil--it can never be in danger, it can never perish. The storm that sweeps over, convulsing the upper air, uprooting forests, and demolishing cities, does not disturb the humbler grasses nor diminish the supply of food for man and beast; so the storms of skepticism which now and then seem so black and dangerous, the "higher criticism" so destructive to some traditions and some men, do not affect the great masses of the people.

Still the world loves Jesus and the church grows; still the children are taught to lisp His name; still the weary and heavy-laden hear Him saying, "Come unto me, and I will give you rest;" still men turn their death-dimmed eyes toward His cross; still the mourner reads, "Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in me;" and still those who have crossed the river send back the shout of triumph [300] "Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

6. The church of Christ is the chief instrumentality for the consummation of God's eternal purpose. It is the pillar which God has lifted up for the support of the truth; it is God's army under the leadership of Prince Immanuel, marching on to certain victory.

The church of to-day is living under a pressure of moral responsibility such as was never felt before. It is standing in the clear light of Christian civilization; it knows the condition of the heathen world; it is under the most solemn vows of allegiance to the Lord Jesus Christ; it has the wealth, the men and the opportunity. In the day of judgment we can not plead ignorance, nor poverty, nor inability. O my soul, what will be thy plea in that solemn day? Will it not be more tolerable for Sodom and Chorazin than for us? Will it not be more tolerable for the heathen than for those who refuse to send them the gospel? For what do we wait? That God may give another gospel and a higher manifestation of His love? That Christ may again come down from heaven and again arise from the dead? That the Holy Spirit may yield to our pleading and become more gracious? Nay, verily, the fault is with the church and not with the heavenly powers. But what does the church need? Does it not need this, the Christianization of Christendom, the conversion [301] and consecration of those who are to be God's agents in the conversion of the world This Christianization of Christendom implies and requires the following things:

First, the putting away of some great systems of evil. We must disband our standing armies and cease to learn the art of war. We must send to heathen lands more Bibles and less rum, more medicine and less opium, fewer drunken and lecherous sailors and more men of God. We must so reform that a Mohammedan could not paint to the squalor and misery of our great cities, to the evils of intemperance, to brothels and gambling-hells, to oppressive commercial combines and to corrupt legislation, and thank God that he is not a Christian.

Second, it needs the evangelization of the unsaved millions of Christendom. How can we go to the heathen nations when two-thirds of our own people are against us? The home missionary work is an important part of the foreign work; it is the source of supplies and the best assurance of success. Blessed is the evangelist who every year converts hundreds and thousands! Blessed is the church that glories not so much in its great scholars as in its great preachers! Blessed is the church that crowds this evangelism in every suburb, in every school district and in every family. Do not say "we want quality, not quantity." We do want quantity; we want numbers, [302] large numbers. We want all the people, all the world, for Christ. We do not pick for broadcloth and brain; every one rescued is a soul saved from death.

Third, the prayer of Christ must be answered, that His disciples may be one, that the world may believe that God has sent Him. There must be unity of testimony, unity of feeling, unity of prayer, and unity of effort. But we must be unified in God's own way, not hewing out for ourselves broken cisterns that will not hold water. "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." We must have union on the seven divine essentials: one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one body, one Spirit, one hope of our calling, and one God and Father of all. But Christian union implies difference and toleration in matters which do not affect the essential faith and practice. You can not so pack cannonballs in a box that they will touch at all points; nor can you so pack men in a church that they will agree in everything. All have access

to the same Bible, and each interprets this Bible according to his ability, or, rather, inability, and perfect agreement would be a miracle. The tacit agreement among Protestant denominations to let one another alone is a most unrighteous and cowardly state of things. As in science, so, at least, in religion, every man is under moral obligation to give and to receive; to speak the [303] truth in love and to hear the truth in the same spirit. Storm is better than stagnation; discussion is better than dishonest acquiescence. It is only by letting our light shine that the darkness is dispelled and that we can come to a unity in our knowledge of the Son of God.

In the fourth place, we must cease wasting the revenues of the kingdom. We must not try to maintain a dozen churches in a village, where two are all that are needed. We must not segregate the church till no part has vitality enough to keep aboveground. Instead of competition, we must have a great religious trust, but not to raise prices. We must not waste our energies on unimportant issues. Hades and the Devil on the one hand, and a post-mortem gospel on the other, will take care of themselves. The higher criticism will get so high as to disappear with the German fog. Discord over church music is not promotive of harmony, and the decisions of the last day will not be determined by "tweedledum and tweedledee." We must not sit on the shore counting straws while thousands are going down in the deep sea.

It is a fifth requirement that the church shall preach the gospel as never before. We make progress in the industrial world by using the power of God in nature--wind, gravitation, heat and electricity. It is so in religion, and the gospel is the power of God unto salvation. The age [304] of miracles is past. "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." The modern church folds its hands and prays that the Holy Spirit may come and convert the millions. The church is still in that upper room in Jerusalem praying for a promise which was fulfilled nearly two thousand years ago; but Christ says, "Go, preach the gospel to every creature."

Sixth, and finally, modern Christendom needs a reconsecration to the service of Christ. It needs to be able to say with Paul: "The love of Christ constrains me; for we thus judge that if one died for all, then were all dead, and that he died for all, that we who live should not live unto ourselves, but unto him who died for us and rose again." If all the church truly prayed "Thy kingdom come," millions of money would follow this prayer; thousands of missionaries would follow this money; and the speedy conversion of the world would follow this consecration of the wealth and power of the church.

By these means, and by others of which we can not conceive, God will bring about the consummation of His eternal purpose to unify, to sum up, all things in Christ, both which are in earth and which are in heaven, even in Him. But the time may be very long. Uncounted ages were occupied in the development of the material world, and it would not be strange if many ages more should precede this glorious consummation. [305] As the angel said to Daniel, so the Saviour would say to each one of us: "But go thou thy way till the end be; for thou shalt rest and stand in thy lot at the end of the days."

But what lies beyond this consummation? What lies beyond? Heaven beyond heaven, life beyond life, glory beyond glory, and progress beyond progress in the infinite universe of God, world without end. [306]

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