

GOD And Missions Today

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Chapter 6

GOD'S CONFIRMATIONS: FRUIT

THE FRUIT OF MISSIONS constitutes a seal from GOD upon the work and the workmen.

When Mark brings his Gospel narrative to a conclusion, he significantly says, "**And they went forth and preached everywhere, the LORD working with [them] and confirming the word with signs following.**" The Lord co-operated with His appointed and anointed workmen and confirmed their work and His own Word by appropriate signs.

In the Book of the Acts of the Apostles, at least one representative instance is given of the various signs promised. There are those who affirm that at no time in subsequent Christian history have supernatural signs even been absolutely lacking, as evidences of the presence and power of Him who promised, saying, "**Lo, I am with you alway.**"

The primitive signs wrought in the apostolic age had their special design and served their special purpose. They laid the base of apostolic work and testimony; but, when foundations were so laid, it was perhaps better that, as the structure rose upon this base, the supernatural character of the work should be attested in different ways, and the form of such attestation change with the demand for each new age; so that, while supernatural signs should never cease, they should acquire new force from their very variety. And, with Professor Christlieb, we firmly hold that, in the history of modern missions particularly, we find numerous occurrences which unmistakably remind us of the apostolic age: * and, he adds, "We cannot, therefore, fully admit the proposition that no more miracles are performed in our day."

That great Messianic prophecy and poem (Isaiah 55:13) more than hints that earlier signs may give way to later ones, not less convincing and conclusive in their way. "**Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree: and it shall be to the LORD for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.**"

This is the only sign that is called "**everlasting**" and "**that shall not be cut off.**" This is perhaps the only sign that is in its nature fitted to be everlasting.

* *Modern Doubt and Christian belief*, p. 332.

The progress of human discovery and invention has gone far toward ameliorating, relieving, and removing the ills to which the body is heir. Modern medicine and surgery have, by methods purely scientific, caused the blind to receive their sight, the lame to walk, the lepers to be cleansed, the deaf to hear, and even the apparently dead to be raised. But there is one point at which all competition is at an end, namely, *the transformation of moral and spiritual character*.

The soul of man and the soil of society, even under the most careful culture, never lose sin. There is a strange sinfulness even in our nature that crops out everywhere and at all times. Education has never yet eliminated sin from man's nature or society. Here is a sign of divine power that cannot be counterfeited by science or art or culture, or even reform.

Between moral reformation and spiritual regeneration there is still a great gulf fixed, and man cannot bridge it. The seven golden ages - of Egypt under the Ptolemies, Greece under Pericles, Rome under Augustus, Italy under Leo the Great, France under Louis the Magnificent, Russia under Ivan IV, England under Elizabeth - were ages of awful profligacy, infidelity, and immorality.

GOD has never given to man the key of life, though He may have given him the key of knowledge. Only He who is the Alpha and Omega has the keys of Hell and of death and can release the soul held in chains of hellish habits and deadly vices.

And here is GOD's "**everlasting sign which shall not be cut off.**"

- "**The blind receive their sight**" when eyes, long blinded to sin and holiness, are opened to see the deformity of the one and the beauty of the other.

- "**The lame walk**" when moral impotency and inability are divinely displaced by power to resist even the most mighty temptations and to break the bonds of the most enslaving vices.

- "**The lepers are cleansed**" whenever the very blood becomes rid of the vile virus of lust, and the unclean beast becomes virtuous, humane, holy.

- "**The deaf hear**" when ears, hopelessly insensible alike to the warnings of justice and the invitations of mercy, catch the whispers from Calvary.

- "**The dead are raised up**" when those who have been destitute of all the energy, the sensibility, the vitality, and the activity of spiritual life, waken like Lazarus to cast off the death-damps and grave clothes and walk with GOD and work for GOD. It is by no means certain that these moral miracles are not in their way more convincing signs of divine power than any others wrought in a lower sphere.

The story of missions is, as the Bishop of Ripon finely intimated, a continuation of the Acts of the Apostles with all its essential supernaturalism. No exhibition of a Power unmistakably divine, or a Presence unmistakably divine, has ever presented to mankind proofs more obvious than those found in these new chapters in this modern Book of the Acts. The devout student of missions, but most of all the devoted worker in missions, bows before these evidences of a

providential and spiritual intervention which to his mind defy doubt, not to say denial.

We read how in the days of CHRIST "**the multitude wondered when they saw the dumb to speak, the maimed to be whole, the lame to walk, and the blind to see: and they glorified the God of Israel**" (Matthew 15:31). Corresponding marvels are to be found in the history of missions and when the doubting disciple, or even the skeptical unbeliever, is confronted with them wonder is excited; and if there is a readiness to be convinced by evidence, conviction becomes irresistible and GOD is again glorified.

Would that all who profess to be disciples would diligently read this new Book of the Acts, which is the book of facts of modern missions! We can see features correspondent to all the most distinctive and distinguishing marks of the apostolic era. The same Pentecostal outpouring; the same marvelous opening of doors, great and effectual; the same call of GOD separating the modern apostles to the work of evangelization; the same grace, converting the Gentiles, purifying their hearts by faith, and anointing converts for service; the same transformation of individuals, and even communities, by the power of the Word and the Spirit; the same overcoming of obstacles and triumph over difficulties; the same supernatural answer to believing prayer.

What a new epoch of missions will begin when the Church of GOD will read with open eyes these new chapters in the history of grace, and see how GOD is yet present and powerfully working in the world, to honor the witnesses to His Gospel!

When James Calvert was asked to give in one sentence a proof of the success of missions, he said: "When I first arrived at the Fiji group, my first duty was to bury the hands, feet, heads, and bones of the arms and legs of eighty victims whose bodies had been roasted and eaten in a cannibal feast. I lived to see the very cannibals who had taken part in that inhuman festival gathered about the Lord's Table."

No more expressive and laconic tablet is to be found in the world than that raised by grateful native converts to Dr. John Geddie on Aneityum, one of the Loyalty Islands, or New Hebrides. It bears in their language the now famous but unique parallelism:

"WHEN HE LANDED HERE

IN 1848

THERE WERE NO CHRISTIANS;

WHEN HE LEFT HERE

IN 1872

THERE WERE NO HEATHENS."

Who has not read the story of Lugalama, the first martyr of Uganda. The cruel Mwanga seized him and Seruwanga and Kakumba, his companions; and, apparently from no other cause than

because these lads had found their way to firm faith in JESUS while yet the king was halting between two opinions, he determined in a rage to put them to death by torture. Mujasi, the cruel wretch who wreaked upon these boys the hate of Mwanga, mocked them. "Oh, you know ISA MASIYA [JESUS CHRIST], do you? . . . You believe you will rise from the dead, do you? Well, I shall burn you and see."

The lads answered the mockery by a sacred hymn:

"Killa sifu tunsifer!" ("Daily, daily, sing the praises," etc.)

A dismal swamp was the chosen Golgotha for these young martyrs. The jeering crowd build a rude framework and heap fuel beneath. First they mutilate Seruwanga and Kakumba, and fling their bleeding bodies upon the framework for the agony of the flame. Then the executioners approach Lugalama, and he cries, "O do not cut off my arms: I will not struggle nor fight - only throw me into the fire!" What a sad prayer, "Only throw me into the fire!" .

But cruelty insists on butchery, and the armless trunk is flung upon the framework for slow fires to finish what the sharp blade has begun. But until their tongues are crisped in the flame, those martyrs continue to sing praises. Cranmer and Ridley and Huss and Jerome did not honor the LORD more truly; and when Musali, standing by, was threatened with a like fate, he boldly said to Mujasi, "I am a follower of ISA, and I am not ashamed of Him."

John G. Paton went to Aniwa, that little island where every atrocity and iniquity had a home, and in three years and a half saw a transformed community, the chief himself leading the way both in the espousal of CHRIST and the public confession of Him; and no book of modern missions has more fascinated every lover of missions than the story of Aniwa.

William B. B. Johnson went to Sierra Leone in 1816. He found there the accumulated refuse of slave ships, thirty African tribes represented, horrible crimes of lust and drink and violence, holding Satanic carnival. He lived only seven years; but before he died he saw that whole community transformed into a model state; in fact, before eighteen months had passed, Mr. Johnson saw a revival so widespread and deep-reaching that it could be compared only to Pentecost.

Where Carey and his co-laborers sowed in tears, there are not less than eight hundred thousand baptized East Indians, and Christian communities numbering four or five times as many. That first convert of all Western Polynesia was the leader of a host now numbering eight hundred thousand living disciples in the South Seas.

Samuel Marsden's twenty years of patience has its reward: in 1842, twenty-eight years after he landed in New Zealand, a bishop was sent from Britain to take charge of a diocese which included the whole nation; and among the Fiji group not one professedly heathen village can be found since that last mountain citadel yielded to CHRIST.

These are but a few examples among many. We might multiply them indefinitely, showing that, even where the laborers have been called to exercise long patience, the latter rain has come though the early rain was withheld, and the harvest has proved abundant.

We reluctantly bring to a close this brief survey of the fruits of missions. Where the field is the world, it is impossible to bring even one blade from all its various harvests to show a specimen of what the seed of the kingdom yields. We have culled here and there what suffices to exhibit the proofs that in no part of the world have such fruits been lacking as proof that it is GOD's husbandry.

In the islands of the sea, the Fiji and Hawaiian groups, Tahiti, Aneityum, and in the South Seas generally; in the most ancient and colossal kingdoms, like Turkey, China, and India, where the most gigantic and stubborn growths of evil were found, and deep-rooted as the ages could make them; where an iron caste system and the imprisoning law of zenana life and harem seclusion made all work seemingly fruitless; again, among comparatively degraded and low caste tribes and people, like the Siamese, Burmese, and Karens; even where the "habitations of cruelty" seemed to have their stronghold, as in Malabar and Calabar; where the people seemed, as Charles Kingsley thought, meant to show that it was possible to sink too low for even the Gospel to reach them, like the Australian aborigines, or the Maoris of New Zealand, or the Fuegians; everywhere, among high and low, the Gospel has been the same power and wisdom of GOD to salvation.

And now what is the grand conclusion? GOD has not only fulfilled His promise unto His missionary band, but His royal challenge is, in the very successes of a century, thundering in our ears: "**Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature,**" in every part of the field which is the world sow the good seed of the kingdom. And the fruit of the handful of grain shall yet shake like the forests of Lebanon.

~ end of chapter 6 ~
