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The Mission Commands of Christ

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THE MISSION COMMANDS
OF CHRIST

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A Thesis Presented to
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Department of New Testament Theology

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
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by
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PREFACE

"The Mission Commands of Christ" is the subject of this paper. It is a subject of considerable interest to our church, which is now rounding out one hundred years of fulfilling His commands in this country, and which three years ago, commemorated the fiftieth anniversary of its foreign mission program. It is a matter of vital importance to the church at large to reevaluate its program of publicity for Christ in the light of the commands of Christ dealing with that publicity. For the individual interested in entering a foreign mission field this subject provides an excellent opportunity to investigate the real motives, the power, and the directives which our Lord included in His final marching orders to His servants.

This paper places emphasis on the word "command." Its purpose is to explain what Christ meant when He said, "Go ye." The discussion deals chiefly with the five records of mission commands which the Savior issued after His resurrection and before His ascension to heaven. The problems of mission work and the various methods and approaches necessary to make that work efficient are beyond the scope of this paper.

After an historical analysis presenting the major trends of thought on the mission command, the paper presents an exegetical

study of the five records of the mission commands. The study is conducted topically rather than by passages, in order to avoid unnecessary duplication. The topics discussed are arranged in the following order: the authority upon which the Savior based His mission commands; the people to whom the Lord addressed the commissions; the people and nations whom the missionaries were to approach; the message of the missionaries; and the help and power with which these missions would be sustained. A closing section on conclusions will bring out the thoughts of the writer in regard to the present implications of the mission commands of Christ.

HISTORICAL ANALYSIS

30 A.D. to 500 A.D.

The Early Church

At the death of John, with which the Apostolic era drew to a close, Christianity had reached, at the very least, large areas in the eastern part of the Mediterranean basin, particularly in Palestine, Syria, Asia Minor, Greece, Italy, and the eastern part of North Africa. Other regions had been touched, it seems quite sure, e.g., Spain, the Balkan countries, Gaul, etc..¹ Legend, more or less reliable, takes Christianity to much farther reaches of the world at this early time, but we have little or no real evidence of these developments. Later structures of Christianity have entirely superseded these early beginnings if they ever really existed.²

But these movements of Christianity far from solved the problem of missions. Even where Christianity had come, the Christians were still a minority group and had to meet the challenge of a majority of heathen surrounding and opposing them. Many regions of the world had never heard the Gospel and the

1. Westminster Historical Atlas to the Bible, ed. by Wright and Filson, p. 92.

Latourette, K. S., History of Expansion of Christianity, vol. I, pp. 81-82.

2. Latourette, Expansion, vol. I, p. 83.

Lord's command sent the early Christians to them also. To the early Christians and to Christians of all times, the problem of missions was a real one, one that demanded an immediate answer and a definite attitude.

In Acts 11, 19 we read of Christians, persecuted and scattered throughout parts of the Mediterranean world, who preached the Gospel where they went. The congregation at Rome appears to be a case in point, for Paul writes to the Romans, expressing the hope that he might come there for the first time and strengthen their faith, which already is renowned in the Christian circles of the Roman world.³ We are not told that any other apostle preached the Gospel to them, but it appears that they first received the good news from individual Christians, perhaps from converts travelling to Rome on business. These contacts may have come largely from converts from the Jewish faith.⁴ This procedure of apostolic times, that Christianity spread largely through the efforts of lay Christians, continued in the following periods⁵

3. Romans 1, 8-13.

4. cf. the case of Aquila and Priscilla, Acts 18, 2.

5. The chief agents in the expansion of Christianity appear not to have been those who made it a profession or a major part of their occupation, but men and women who earned their livelihood in some purely secular manner and spoke of their faith to those whom they met in this natural fashion. Thus when Celsus denounces a religion which spreads through workers in wool and leather and fullers and uneducated persons who get hold of children privately and of ignorant women and teach them, Origen does not deny that this occurs. Latourette, Expansion, vol. I, pp. 116-117.

The early Christians must have felt that the obligation of the mission command fell upon the shoulders of the individual. Whether they felt this as an expressed obligation or merely as a privilege and an activity of the Christian life is very hard for us to determine.⁶ No doubt many considered both to be the case.⁷

The role of the leaders in the church in the spread of Christianity is not as clear as that of the people themselves, perhaps partly because of the inadequacy of the records.⁸ Paul and the other apostles were men of this type. How clearly the realization of this role existed, we do not know, but later a formal system of education arose for the instruction of new Christians. Many of these entered the church through the efforts of Christian friends, some through the work of men whom we would call missionaries in our day. But their education lay in the hands of trained Christians who spent much of their time in that work.

These situations obtained until the recognition of Christianity by Constantine. Perhaps it is in place to comment upon the effect of persecution on the spread of the Gospel and on the general attitude toward missions. One effect, that of wilful

6. Ibid., p. 117.

7. cf., Acts 18, 26 according to which Aquila and Priscilla trained the Alexandrian orator, Apollos, in the doctrines of Christianity.

8. It is probable, however, that for about the first two centuries types of Christians existed, one of whose chief functions it was to propagate the faith. Latourette, Expansion, vol. I, p. 114.

martyrdom, had its interesting consequences.⁹ But whether this wilful martyrdom had as its chief motive the desire to bring others to faith in the Gospel is doubtful. Certainly a thinking Christian would not leap into martyrdom just to witness to his faith, when he could do that by word of mouth much longer and more efficiently if he remained alive. This very act of wilful martyrdom seems to indicate that the zeal of some Christians was turning inward and not outward toward other people and their salvation. Of course we must remember that for each wilful martyr there were many whose martyrdom was really a witnessing to the Gospel. Wilful martyrdom was the exception rather than the rule, but an exception that depicted an unwholesome trend. Persecutions, however, did bring about a reevaluation of the merits and advantages of Christianity.

Perhaps one of the most important transitions for early Christianity was its transition from the status of a religio illicita to that of a religio licita and finally to that of a state religion of the Roman Empire. Constantine in 313 A.D. issued the Edict of Milan, granting toleration to all Christians.

9. While the leaders of the Church usually strove to restrain those who craved martyrdom, we hear of numbers who rushed in to seek that honour. Upon many pagans the heroism of the victims must have made an impression, and it is not surprising to read of the conversion of at least two thoughtful men, both experts in philosophy and formerly critics of the Christians, because of what they had witnessed. Ibid., p. 156.

Later in his life he made it an official State religion, but did little to quell paganism. This was carried on by his successors.¹⁰

But far more important to our interests is the question, What effect did the governmental approval have on the mission attitude of the Christian Church? The approval of the government was not a mission effort but an effort toward religious uniformity within its jurisdiction.¹¹ But the government's attitude of intolerance to non-Christians and dissenters was not peculiar to it. This attitude seems to have infiltrated into the church itself. The church already showed the strong political tendencies later so prominent in the papacy.¹² How may we describe this attitude? Was it the real evangelical passion for souls, or was it merely a misguided passion for a general religious uniformity? As in all times of Christianity, neither extreme is all right or all wrong. No doubt, in the rapid progress of events, many Christians lost sight of the pure evangelical approach

10. Qualben, L. P., A History of the Christian Church, p. 95. Latourette, Expansion, vol. I, pp. 174-177.

11. The government was attempting to enforce religious uniformity, and sought not only to stamp out the rivals to Christianity, but to eradicate all varieties of that faith but the one which it deemed orthodox. With the autocratic trend of the imperial rule, a religious intolerance arose which was much more unyielding than had been that of the Empire at its height.

Latourette, Expansion, vol. I, p. 184.

12. The measures of the government were paralleled by those of the Church and of individual Christians. Indeed, the policy of the state was in part only a symptom of the movement toward Christianity. A kind of mass conversion was in progress. Ibid., p. 185.

and urged missions for ignoble reasons, political uniformity, conformity to mass opinion, and the like. But that these less honorable motives were tempered by the nobler motives of service to God and love to men can hardly be denied in the case of many Christians. Doubtless, many retained the real desire to win souls for Christ; evidence for this fact appears in the intensive training still required for catechumens and the interest of church men in that training.¹³

The problem of the motive behind mass forced conversions will arise for discussion at this point. In many instances, this has been vastly overemphasized. The case of Clovis and the Franks frequently is made an example for proof.¹⁴ But Latourette denies the validity of this example.¹⁵ But, even granting that force was used in an appreciable number of instances, this does not necessarily invalidate the motive for mission work; forced conversions may well have resulted from misguided zeal for the Kingdom. Indirectly, of course, forced conversions imply a basic misunderstanding of the purpose and the power of the Gospel. This subject will receive a brief treatment in the next

13. Thus Latourette explains that all conversions were not just by State example and command but

Everywhere the actual work of conversion and the attendant instruction were carried on by the Church itself through many individual Christians.

Ibid..

14. Qualben, op. cit., p. 120.

15. Clovis used no force to induce the Franks to conform to his example, but a large number of his warriors quickly followed him and it was almost inevitable that in time the others would do so. Latourette, Expansion, vol. I, p. 207.

section when we consider Charlemagne and Olaf Tryggvason, who are better examples of the problem in hand. Again we must say that forced conversions were the exception rather than the rule at this time and represent only a small segment of Christianity.

A far more intangible but long-lasting perversion of the mission motive may have had its roots in this period, missions for the glory of the Church rather than of God. As early as the third century Cyprian of Carthage propounded the views of the exclusiveness of the Church.¹⁶ That this later became a motive for conversion, we shall see in the next periods of our discussion. But during this time the Church gains its identity as the Roman Church. And the emphasis upon the glory of the Church begins to outweigh the emphasis upon the glory of God in the motive for missions.

16. Qualben, op. cit., pp. 97-98.

500 A.D. to 1500 A.D.
The Middle Ages

Perhaps the two most significant factors for the mission attitude in this period are the rise of the papacy, or the hierarchically organized church, and the movement of nations.

With the downfall of the Roman Empire and the influx of barbarian nations, the Church began to take an ever-increasing role in the affairs of the world. As the head of that Church, the Pope directed her efforts in the realm of expansion.¹ Gregory I, the Great, who lived at the opening of this period, is the outstanding example of missionary popes;² his attitude seems to have been quite zealous although tainted considerably with the desire of centralizing ecclesiastical power in the Roman See.³ Gregory's successors continued his missionary efforts in greater or less degrees, but with ever increasing emphasis upon papal power and jurisdiction.⁴

At the opening of this period, Christianity was the dominant religion in the empire proper. But the invading nations knew little or nothing of the Christian faith. It was the task

1. Latourette, Expansion, vol. II, pp. 18-19.

2. Ibid., p. 61.

3. Ibid., p. 63.

4. Under the Cluniac movement culminating in Gregory VII and Innocent III the Church dictated to the secular princes.
Ibid., p. 310.

of the Church to reach these incoming people with the Gospel. The process, which was usually employed, showed a lack of understanding of Christianity but also an abundance of zeal. Conversion was frequently tied up with military conquest; this made for much mass conversion and for some forced conversions.⁵

The fact that mass conversions were frequent during this period can hardly be denied; but that they were always the result of force is yet another question. If we consider the religious outlook of pagan peoples, we can readily realize that their changes of religion did not entail too much difficulty for them because their beliefs were often hazy and superstitious. But the purposes of the Christians who converted them were varied. Whatever we may say of their method, we must be careful not to condemn their motives categorically and completely.⁶

5. Not infrequently mass conversion was hastened by the use of force...often baptism was imposed as a sign of submission to a foreign conqueror.

Ibid., p. 16.

6. Conversion was largely by groups. Repeatedly it was engineered by the natural leader of a people, the monarch. Occasionally the king used force... Often the ruler consulted legally recognized assemblies of leading men... Sometimes the king obviously acted from religious conviction. In some instances...the religious appears to have been mixed with the political motive... Occasionally monarchs... furthered missions as agencies of political conquest.

Ibid., pp. 145-146.

They took up the word of Jesus, "Compel them to come in," and acted on it with a vengeance. They were convinced that in the heaven, which they believed they were opening up for men and women by the gateway of the sacraments, these same people would come and express gratitude that they had been saved from a dreadful hell - even though it had been by compulsion:

Soper, E. D., The Philosophy of the Christian World

Mission, p. 112.

We cannot endorse the second of these statements, but we may learn from it at least the noblest motives of the "conquering" missions.

Interesting to note in this study is a comparison of Moslems and Christians in their treatment of each other. Moslems generally treated subjugated Christians quite well, imposing upon them a moderate tax and restricting their rights of evangelization.⁷ This is a general observation, for the policy of Moslems in their relations toward Christians varied over the area controlled by them. Among the Arab rulers, for example, there was some alarm when the Christians were converted to Islam, for this substantially reduced their income from taxes; thus they became more lenient; in fact, they even forbade conversions in some cases. Then again some treated Christians with mild persecution.⁸ But both Christians and Moslems used some force and compulsion in adding converts to their numbers.⁹ Probably this implies that the motive behind the mission work of both religions may have been at least partly religious but could hardly have been purely Christian in the followers of the Savior.

The most distressing commentary on the mission attitude of the Middle Ages is that series of wars called the Crusades. They boasted of no evangelistic motives, of no motives higher than that of freeing the Holy Land from the oppressive hold of the infidel Turk. The same motives were preached against other heathen

7. Latourette, Expansion, vol. II, p. 296.

8. Ibid., p. 296.

9. In the thousand years we are spanning ... the sword seems to have been used as freely to advance the religion of the Cross as it was to propagate that of the Crescent.

Ibid., p. 290.

nations and even against would-be reforming bodies. Baser motives prompted some of the later Crusades, e.g., the notorious Fourth Crusade with its abortive Latin Empire.¹⁰

But to say that the Crusades expressed the universal opinion of their times is overstating the case. Many men arose with protests against the principles underlying the Crusades. Even Pope Honorius IV wished to see the Moslems converted and encouraged Arabic study for this purpose. The leaders of the two great missionary orders, Dominic and Francis, and, particularly, Raymond Lull urged mission possibilities among Moslems and acted on their own urgings.¹¹ That they represented the mass of the people is perhaps untenable, but they certainly represented a strong feeling against the principle of the Crusades. This feeling speaks strongly for the presence of at least the vestiges of a recognized mission command in the Middle Ages.

In the early Middle Ages and also through to the turn of the sixteenth century, giants of missions arose. Patrick, Boniface, Ansgar, Lull, Cyril, Methodius, and Willibrord are all names which are indelibly written into mission histories, whether they all represented purity of motive, or not. In this period several new missionary orders of great importance arose.¹² Those

10. Ibid., pp. 317-318.

11. Ibid., pp. 319-321.

12. Ibid., p. 348.

Bliss, E. M., A Concise History of Missions, p. 230.

of long standing did not have the missionary vigor of the more recent ones, notably the Franciscans and the Dominicans.¹³

Yet we must keep in mind that the Franciscans, Dominicans, and other missionary orders, as well as individuals, followed the footsteps of many of the conquering kings. They worked hand in hand with them in their efforts at mass conversions. This implies that they could not have understood well the command to preach the Gospel to men, not to force them into church membership. The motives of these groups was not very Biblical, either. They were often more interested in the building of the Roman Catholic Church than of the Kingdom of God.

The preceding facts concerning this period of the Church's existence have dealt particularly with the Roman half of the Church. In addition, the Greek Catholic Church, the Monophysites, the Nestorians, and a few other small groups were active. But they do not offer a very large problem. Perhaps in only one way do they differ from the Western Church, that of energy. Whatever the reason may be, the Western Church far outstripped these other bodies in their efforts to evangelize other nations.¹⁴

13. Latourette, Expansion, vol. II, p. 320.

14. Through many, perhaps most, of the religious movements of the West runs a strain of activism - often in marked contrast with the quietism of Eastern monasticism. This strain becomes more pronounced as the centuries pass.

Ibid., p. 435.

As far as numbers are concerned, the period of the Middle Ages was extremely productive of new Christianity. More territory was covered in this time than before; more people came under the sway of the Church. But there are also a number of factors which describe the Middle Ages less favorably. The nature of many conversions, mass and forced, strongly hints that they arose from motives hardly pure and noble. The outbursts of the vicious Crusades indicate that the Christian evangelical motive was a thing wanting in the hearts of many, even in the occupant of the papal chair. But many individuals and numerous organizations kept the missionary spirit alive if not blazing; with the new age that spirit gained new life and support from the new church and from the old one.

1500 A.D. to 1800 A.D.
The Reformation Period

This section concerns the mission attitude of the Church during the time of its great Reformation and the subsequent development of the Roman Catholic and Protestant branches. The date 1500 denotes roughly the beginning of the Reformation Era, in which a form of Christianity long obscured arose again to popular attention; logically, this form of Christianity should display its own attitude on the question of missions. It is important for us to determine the trends of that attitude. The date 1800 represents the beginning of a new age in the mission interest and perhaps the end of much of the doctrinal development of the post-Reformation Church.

At first we turn to the leaders of the Reformation movement to inspect their attitude on this question. Luther himself seems to have had a clear idea that the Gospel was to be preached; his actions and writings about religious instruction and education demonstrate that point thoroughly. But he placed little or no emphasis upon the world call for evangelization. His explanation to the Second Petition emphasized the work of the Holy Spirit but leaves its limits within the hearts of those who are praying.¹

1. Jacobs, H., Book of Concord, p. 368.
cf. Large Catechism in Ibid., p. 456.

n.b.
NT
see
Place
Elect
Large
Evangelism

In his commentary on Mark 16, Luther states:

A question arises about this passage, "Go ye into all the world," as to how it is to be understood, since the apostles certainly did not visit all the world: No apostle came hither to us; and many a heathen island has since been discovered, where the Gospel has never been preached: Yet the Scriptures say: "Their sound went out into all the earth:" Rom. 10, 18: Answer: Their preaching went out into all the world: This going out has been begun and continues, although it is not yet completed; the Gospel, however, will be preached ever farther and wider, until the judgment day: When this preaching shall have reached all parts of the world, and shall have been everywhere heard; then will the message be complete and its mission accomplished; then will the last day be at hand.²

This statement certainly indicates that Luther was interested in the welfare of the world and in the spread of the Gospel. But his interest does not have the virile enthusiasm and activity that lie behind his other religious interests. It appears to be more passive than his other interests.

Historians and biographers generally disagree on Luther's stand on the mission question: Some misunderstand Luther entirely and deny that he had any interest in world missions.³

Others give a far fairer and more reasonable analysis of Luther's mission attitude, stating that he realized that the

². Lenker, J. N., The Precious and Sacred Writings of Martin Luther, vol. XII, pp. 201-202.

³. So far as the non-Christian world was concerned his view was so limited that he could believe, "That Christianity had already fulfilled its universal calling to be the religion of the world."

Soper, op. cit., pp. 119-120.

Gospel had a universal scope to it.⁴ But the fact still remains that Luther did not urge world-wide missions, even though he admitted their probability in the future. His attitude toward the Mohammedans was one of hopelessness: they were so depraved that the best move was to surrender them to Satan.⁵

Several extenuating factors present themselves in this consideration of Luther's attitude toward the mission command. As the Great Reformer he had his hands more than full with the burden of reestablishing pure Christianity in Germany, let alone the rest of Europe.⁶ The conditions in Luther's Europe demanded his religious attention and to them he turned all his efforts of bringing the Gospel. Luther felt a deep mission command for these people and was largely occupied with them.

This fact largely accounts for Luther's lack of emphasis on foreign or world mission work; perhaps a greater reason was that in Luther's time little was known about the rest of the world.

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4. Luther knows, and teaches accordingly, that the command to evangelize is valid for all time; he refers to the progress of preaching through the centuries to his time. (Translation)
Plitt-Hardeland, Geschichte der Lutherischen Mission, p. 6.
He himself revealed this news, whenever his calling demanded it of him. Its purpose, to go throughout the world, he urged loudly and would not admit that any boundaries might justly be set to it. (Translation)
Ibid., p. 14.
5. Frick, H., Die Evangelische Mission, p. 37.
Plitt-Hardeland, op. cit., p. 13.
6. Thus one writer describes the meaning of the word "heathenism" in Luther's day as
Error, superstition, the dark night of sin, in which the faint glow of the light of natural reasons lightly modified the absolute darkness.
Frick, op. cit., p. 19.

The Mediterranean world was still "the world" to people of his time. The remote Orient and the newly-discovered Western Hemisphere were hardly realities to the busy German Reformer. Luther in 1600 or 1700 might well have been a great proponent of missions, one who would place Carey, Schwartz, and others in the shade. But Luther in 1500 was busy laying the foundations of a Christianity which could later produce such men as Carey and Schwartz.

Calvin seems to have been one with Melanchthon in actually denying the mission command.⁷ This attitude grew with the movement of Orthodoxy and Rationalism, until the entire mission impulse fell victim, with many other Christian values, to the ravages of human reason upon divine revelation.

Missions in the Roman Catholic Church experienced a great revival during this time. The Counter-Reformation, an attempt to quell the Reformation, emphasized mission work as one of its main features. Representatives of the Society of Jesus, Loyola, Xavier, and others, emphasized the spread of the Roman Catholic Church in new parts of the world as well as the regaining of territory lost in the youth of the Reformation. The zeal was there, but it was a zeal directed chiefly to the church and not

7. The mission command was incumbent only upon those who were apostles, Latin "missionaries." Such "bidden twelve" do not exist today any more, therefore the mission command is not binding for the present. The office for it is lacking. Thus the dogmatician, Melanchthon!!!

Frick, op. cit., p. 15.

Thus also Warneck, G., Outline of a History of Protestant Missions from the Reformation to the Present Time, p. 136.

directly to Christ and His commands.⁸ The motive behind these missions was largely the same it had been for centuries, the spread of the influence of the Church of Rome.

While Protestantism had sterile periods during this time, missions and mission interest were not totally lacking among people of that faith. In connection with the Pietistic movement branching from Spener, Wetz, Francke, Zinzendorf, and others,⁹ an intense fervor for missions arose in certain Protestant circles. Among the leaders of the early Protestant missions, fervor was not lacking. Ziegenbalg and Pluetschau went to India in the face of great uncertainty and remained there in the teeth of fierce opposition.¹⁰ Schwartz worked in India for almost fifty years with unrelenting zeal and enthusiasm.¹¹ The Moravians from their founding to the present day have led other church bodies in mission efforts throughout the world.

At the turn of the nineteenth century William Carey appeared on the scene. It was he who is often termed the Father of modern Protestant missions.¹² His lowly beginnings as a cobbler, intense

8. Filled originally with the thought of "the world for Christ," they came to interpret it "the world for the Church." Perhaps the most significant illustrations...were Loyola and Xavier. The crowds who in India looked upon Xavier almost as Christ Himself were in turn looked upon rather as witnesses to the power of the Church than as individuals to be saved.

Bliss, op. cit., p. 230.

9. Latourette, Expansion, vol. III, pp. 46-48.

Latourette, Expansion, vol. IV, p. 89.

10. Latourette, Expansion, vol. III, pp. 278-279.

11. Ibid., p. 280.

12. Soper, op. cit., p. 123.

application to religious matters, and steadfast perseverance in the face of great trials bespeak great zeal in this missionary.¹³

But one aspect of the mission attitude in the Pietistic and later mission movements demands our consideration. As mentioned before, Roman Catholicism seems to have emphasized the glory of the Church rather than the glory of God as the end of missions. With the Protestant movements for missions in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries came an emphasis upon the need of men for the saving Gospel.¹⁴ The error does not seem to be in a misconception of the truth, but rather in the emphasis of a lesser truth, that of need, and the soft-pedaling of a greater truth, the command of Christ. The later implications of this false emphasis will appear in the next section. Already in this period however, it seems to show the ephemeral nature of the enthusiastic movement.¹⁵ That this death of mission interest in less than a century was directly the result of a wrong emphasis in motive is too much for us to say. But wrong emphasis on mission motive seems to run parallel to the general, wrong emphasis

13. Latourette, Expansion, vol. IV, pp. 66-69.

14. The one supreme object comes to be the saving of men. It crowds out even the command. Then comes another stage. The man once brought to the light reveals the possibilities of his nature, and the desire to save him from spiritual death is supplemented by the desire to develop in him the full spiritual life.

Soper, op. cit., p. 232.

15. Of Halle, the great missionary institute, we read that: Before the end of Schwartz's life the fires of missionary enthusiasm in Halle were burning low and recruits were slow in coming. Latourette, Expansion, vol. III, p. 280.

of the Pietistic movement, the emphasis on feeling.

At the opening of the nineteenth century, the cause of missions had experienced a varied life for three centuries. With the early reformers, Luther in particular, mission interest was emphasized but to a certain extent tacitly limited. With the growth of the Calvinistic emphasis on the Divine Will, the cause of missions suffered severely; it became blasphemy to try to supplement God's will in saving souls. Thus it fared throughout "Orthodoxy." In violent reaction Pietism arose, emphasized missions for the bettering of the state of the lost heathen, but its emphasis was, speaking in terms of centuries, little more than a flash in the pan. This was the situation at the beginning of the nineteenth century when William Carey, with his strong following, had taken command of the scene in England and opened a new era in the work of missions. The German missionary societies followed and surpassed his lead.

1800 A.D. to the Present Modern Missions

This period presents considerable difficulty to the analyst. One does not have the perspective of time that makes analysis practicable. Furthermore, this period covers the time of a great surge in mission interest and work and concerns numerous church bodies and sects of all types. Sources are more readily available for this period, but they are overpoweringly numerous, and it is difficult to judge their representative qualities. For these reasons and for the sake of brevity in this introductory section of the paper, the writer will make his remarks about general trends and will confine the bulk of the references to the footnotes.

With the zeal and fervor of the great mission leader, Carey, the nineteenth century opened auspiciously. England had become a great commercial nation with foreign holdings and from her people the mission impulse gathered much strength. German mission societies contributed much also; as, later, did the American societies.¹

A variety of approaches to the problem of missions came

1. Latourette, K. S., Anno Domini, p. 169, emphasizes the vigor of European and American Christianity in the growth of nineteenth century missions.

with the new zeal. Hudson Taylor of the China Inland Mission urged the self-support of missions, discouraging solicitation of funds.² Miller, among many others, founded the Madras Christian College with the purpose in mind to bring all of India to Christianity by a slow process of cultural development.³ Many hoped for the conversion of entire nations;⁴ some still urged the conversion of single converts.⁵ Some, such as Duff and Richard, felt that the education and conversion of the rich and influential would bring whole nations to Christ.⁶ All these varied opinions on approach indicate a diversity of opinion which goes back to the basic question of motive and command. These differences exist to the present day and are more carefully and completely delineated in the discussions of the twentieth century.

Significant among these discussions are the three international missionary conferences in Edinburgh (1910), Jerusalem (1928), and Madras (Tambaram) (1938) and the Laymen's Inquiry. The last represents the radical wing in its desire to emphasize the humanitarian side of missions. In its report, Rethinking Missions, the Laymen's Inquiry Board offers numerous objections to the existing state of mission affairs. It urges more cooperation with heathenism. It demands a more complete religious,

2. Latourette, Expansion, vol. VI, p. 329.

3. Ibid., p. 190.

4. Ibid., p. 437.

5. Ibid., p. 52, vol. IV.

6. Ibid., vol. VI, p. 319.

social, ethical program in missions. It urges further emphasis, and almost exclusive emphasis upon humanitarian work, rather than upon evangelization. Generally it shows an extreme reaction to the conservative form of conducting missions. It demanded a considerable change in the procedure of mission work for the future. This movement did not gain any amount of support and leaves only some literature as its record.⁷

The meetings in Edinburgh and Jerusalem did much to consolidate Protestant mission effort. Edinburgh contributed a comprehensive review of world missions and a copious comparing of notes on methods and approaches.⁸ The Jerusalem meeting brought closer scrutiny of existing conditions, and a careful examination of faulty practices; proselytizing, for example, was roundly condemned.⁹

In preparation for the Madras (Tambaram) conference, Kraemer wrote his conservative volume, A Christian Message in a Non-Christian World, to state the stand of missions in general at that time. He condemned and exhibited the weakness of the syncretism of the Laymen's Inquiry, demonstrating that a firm stand on Christianity was the strongest weapon for effective mission

7. Rethinking Missions, A Laymen's Inquiry After One Hundred Years, passim.

Latourette, Expansion, vol. VII, p. 52.

8. Kraemer, H., The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World, p. 36.

9. Ibid.

work.¹⁰ The Madras conference followed his lead in urging education for the building of indigenous churches.¹¹

A cross section of twentieth century mission literature brings out the same points as developed in this discussion of rather official documents. Men of liberal views generally urge the sharing principle and unionism among various Christian mission bodies.¹²

A number of new trends have developed generally in mission circles, during this period especially. Chief among them was the emphasis upon related humanitarian and educational projects conducted together with the mission work proper. As we have seen before, the place of these efforts was disputed; some said that they should remain the means to the greater end of evangelization; others maintained that they served an end in themselves.¹⁴

Another trend was to the uniform building of indigenous church bodies among some Protestant groups; although this move was opposed largely by those men who represented the view that Christianity and the other religions should work on a sharing basis. This view obviated the Western institution of the church and urged the spread of Christianity as a superior philosophy of life

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10. *Ibid.*, *passim*.
 11. Latourette, *Expansion*, vol. VII, p.55.
 12. cf. E. Stanley Jones, *Christ of the Indian Road*.
Van Dusen, H. P., ... *For the Healing of the Nations*.
McKenzie, J., *The Christian Task in India*, et. al.
 13. Zwemer, *Thinking Missions with Christ*.
Kraemer, *op. cit.*.
The Fundamentals, vol. XII, pp. 64-96.
 14. Higginbottom, S., *Letters to Presbyterian church on progress of Allahabad*.

to be connected to the heathen philosophies.¹⁵

Post-war thinking and war-time thinking have frequently questioned the usefulness and effectiveness of Christian missions. Much argument that missions did not stop wars and that heathen nations do not show the effect of missions has been bandied about lightly. This thinking has had its effect, not in the discouragement of missions, but rather in the more careful organization of mission stations and work, and the determination to make missions a more telling factor in the events of the world. Christianity has been emphasized as the means of settling the world's problems of war and peace. Among more liberal men, the emphasis lies upon matters which to the Gospel are by-products of the Christian's salvation through Christ.

Perhaps the most important trend for our purposes is in the motive for missions. That trend has a close relationship to the trends in approach and method. Those other trends indicated a deeper interest in the temporal difficulties and an emphasis on humanitarian work. Logically these trends branch from and are a part of the motive of missions which emphasized the great need of people, almost to the exclusion of any command or directive from God. Even among conservative circles that point is emphasized

15. cf. Jones, J. P., India its Life and Thought, "Christ and the Buddha," pp. 338-373.

inordinately.¹⁶ This may have its logical development from the modern emphasis on human judgment in religion and the ignoring of the divine authority as a basis of faith.

16. Thus Zwemer, the great Presbyterian proponent for Moham-
 medan missions throughout the world, endorses the missionary
 hymn, From Greenland's Icy Mountains, as a complete argument
 for the mission project.

One could scarcely crowd an argument for the
 basis, the aim, the motive and the goal of
 missions into smaller compass than we have
 in these four verses of eight lines each.

Zwemer, op. cit., p. 77.

It is significant to note in this connection that the hymn by
 Reginald Heber deals distinctly and exclusively with human need
 and omits mention of divine command.

Conclusions on Historical Analysis

During the course of this discussion on the historical development of the attitude toward the mission motive, we have discussed nineteen centuries of progress and many leaders and groups interested in missions. In summary it would be well for us to outline the trends, if any, which the attitude of the church has taken during those centuries.

The central attitude about which these trends have circulated is this, that the Gospel should be preached to people because they need salvation, but particularly because the Lord Jesus has commanded it. In the early centuries, the mission motive seems to have remained close to this central attitude. But with the rise of the Roman Catholic hierarchy, the emphasis has shifted from the command of God and His glory, to the command and glory of the Church. This emphasis remains to the present day in the Roman Catholic church. In the great religious conquest of barbarian Europe, in the Crusades, and in the Jesuit expansion of the Counter-Reformation this was particularly in evidence.

With the Reformation, the mission motive gained purification. With Luther, the command of God and His power in fulfilling this work became very strong as a working motive. In Calvinism, the

authority and power of God came in for strong emphasis, almost to the exclusion of human activity. This exclusion of human activity grew in the movement of Orthodoxy. A violent reaction arose in the Pietistic movement, among the Moravians and the Methodists. Among these people the emphasis began to lie on the need of people without Christ, although the command and authority of God still came in for consideration. The mission motive died completely in the realm of Rationalism, but with the opening of the nineteenth century it gained new life. The emphasis, however, turned more and more to the need of humans and less and less to the command of God. With the emphasis upon the spiritual need of men, came the emphasis upon physical need, in some cases eliminating the spiritual need entirely. At the present time emphasis remains upon human need, often far away from the original central motive of God's command first and human need second.

THE MISSION COMMAND

General Remarks

Much as we may be inclined to speculate about the thoughts of men on this subject so vital to church expansion, we can gain total conviction of the correct course only by referring to the source of all true Christian thought, Scripture. All of history's attitude on this subject is but one composite of judgments, true and false, on what the Savior said, or should have said, on this matter. From Scripture we must obtain our convictions concerning the mission command.

Of all the mission commands in the Bible, the one recorded in Matt. 28, 18-20 is the best known. The substance of this command of our Savior occurs five times in the New Testament. The Matthew passage and that in Mark 16, 15 and 16 were very possible uttered at approximately the same time, during one of the last appearances of Christ.¹ The commands in Luke 24, 46-49 and in Acts 1, 8 seem to have been given during His last appearance to the disciples in Jerusalem, shortly before the Ascension.² John 20, 21-23 contains a command issued in one of the earlier post-resurrection appearances, that of the night of Easter day.³

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1. Robertson, A. T., Harmony of the Gospels, p. 249.
Edersheim, A., Life and Times of Jesus, the Messiah, vol. II, p. 651.
 2. Robertson, Harmony, pp. 250-251.
Edersheim, op. cit., vol. II, p. 652.
 3. Robertson, Harmony, p. 246.
Edersheim, op. cit., vol. II, p. 643.

Two earlier commands of Christ directly connected with the mission of His apostles occurred in the Galilean⁴ and later Judean⁵ ministries. The former dealt with the commissioning of the twelve disciples to preach the Gospel to the people of Israel, Matt. 10, 1-42; Mark 6, 7-13; Luke 9, 1-6.⁶ The latter was addressed to seventy followers of Jesus who were to precede Him in His travels. This is recorded in Luke 10, 1-16.

The final command of any person is logically his most compelling will. Therefore we shall deal primarily with the commands that Jesus uttered after His resurrection. But it will be necessary for us to investigate these earlier commands of our Savior; for we may well expect an important, integral relation between the two sets of commands. We shall also wish to determine any further information in the earlier commands which the Savior did not repeat in His final marching orders.

4. Robertson, op. cit., pp. 79-80.

Edersheim, op. cit., vol. I, p. 641.

5. Robertson, op. cit., p. 120.

Edersheim, op. cit., vol. II, p. 135.

6. For harmony see Robertson, op. cit., pp. 78-82.

The Authority

"All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth." (Matt. 28, 18) "Thus it is written ... that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations." (Luke 24, 46-47) "As My Father hath sent Me, so send I you." (John 20, 21) These statements constitute the authority upon which Jesus bases His entire command. } If we investigate this question of the authority for the command, we shall be able to realize its importance for all Christians.

The basis on which Christ founds the authority for His commission to His apostles is His deity. In the three passages mentioned above He makes it very clear; in the other commissioning passages it is implied by His very giving of a command that is so world-sweeping.

In Matthew 28, 18, Christ lays the foundation with the words, "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth." Perhaps a better translation for ἐξουσία is "authority."¹ But the translation can hardly affect the implication: Christ ascribes to Himself prerogatives which God alone can possess, an

1. Revised Standard Version, The New Testament of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, p. 71.

authority to rule the universe and with it, of course, the power to exert that authority.² With this statement of His deity, He introduces His commission.³ To the disciples, Christ's resurrection was a final proof of His superiority over other men, of His supreme authority, of His very Godhead.⁴ Thus Thomas (John 20, 28), Peter (Acts 3, 15), Paul (Rom. 1, 4), and John (Rev. 1, 5) made confession of that very fact.

[In Luke 24, 46 Jesus calls upon Scripture as His authority and by means of it establishes His own authority. He takes Scripture as a testimony to His work - His suffering, His resurrection, and now the propagation of His Gospel.⁵ The disciples had been witnesses of the first two of these works of Christ and they had been convinced of His deity through them. Now they were to become agents of the result of His first two works, of the salvation of nations. Their authority: Scripture, which pointed to the divine work of the God-Man, Christ, effecting the salvation of men.

2. Expositors' Greek Testament, ed. W. R. Nicoll, vol. I, p. 339.

3. The majesty of Christ is the ground both for His sending and for their allowing themselves to be sent.

Lange-Schaff, A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures, Critical, Doctrinal, and Homiletical, vol. XVII, p. 557.

4. The suggestion that the reference may be to the resurrection, and the meaning that that event ipso facto placed Jesus in a position of power. cf. Rom. 1, 4.

Expositors' Greek Testament, vol. I, p. 339.

has validity for this case, provided that it is applied subjectively to the disciples and their faith, and not objectively to the power which Christ had gained; for He had this power from eternity as the Son of God.

5. Zahn, Theodor, Kommentar zum Neuen Testament, vol. III, pp. 730-731.

Expositors' Greek Testament, vol. I, p. 650.

"As my Father sent Me, so send I you." (John 20, 21) With these words Christ authorizes His commission in John's Gospel. In only a very limited way could the work of the apostles be considered parallel to that of Christ. He saved and preached; they preached only.⁶ But the acts of sending are almost entirely parallel. God sent His Son; Christ, the Son, and God also, sent His disciples.

In His high priestly prayer, Christ utters the same words: "As Thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world." (John 17, 18) Already at that time He had given them the commission. He would repeat it again, with this as His authority: the Father sent me; now I am sending you; for I and the Father are one.⁷ Again, Christ refers to His deity, the deity that worked the salvation of men, as the authority for His commissioning His disciples.

In the two other references to the Great Commission, Christ does not introduce His command with this authorizing statement. But that is hardly necessary; for in His person, particularly in His Risen Person, He carried as strong an authorization as one could demand for any project, particularly for one which proclaimed Him.⁸

6. Lenski, R. C. H., Interpretation of New Testament, vol. III, p. 1345.

7. Expositors' Greek Testament, vol. I, p. 844.

8. Even Latourette, who questions the clarity of any mission command and purpose in Christ (Latourette, Anno Domini, p. 4),

It is interesting and important to note that Christ's references to His deity in these cases are all connected with the work that He has done for men. This is particularly clear in the Luke passage where the command is so closely linked with the suffering and resurrection. In the John passage, the sending of Jesus by the Father is obvious in its purpose, the work of salvation. In the Matthew passage this implication is not as clear, but it is no doubt contained in Christ's tacit reference to His "authority-giving" resurrection, the seal for all His work.

8. claims:

The enduring influence of Jesus has been due to the response which men have given to that life. Latourette, Anno Domini, p. 8,

and

The experience of the past nineteen centuries, however, gives him assurance that in it Jesus is central, that the dominant forces in the universe are on the side of Jesus, and that ultimately God and His Christ will prevail.

Ibid., p. 240.

Note: This statement is quoted merely for the sake of presenting Latourette's view concerning the influence of the supernatural nature of Christ, not for the sake of endorsing his apparent universalism.

The Commissionees

Our next problem is: Who received the command? Our first and most obvious answer is: the Eleven, and later, Paul. But was this command restricted to the Eleven? Did Christ indicate that only certain ones were called? Was there anything in the command that limited it, or part of it, to the Eleven alone? Or was the command definitely transferred from the Eleven to others also? Was it distinctly made universal?

The first of the post-Resurrection commissions was issued on Easter Night. John is very brief in his description of the details, but identifies the incident as happening on "the same day at evening, being the first day of the week." (John 20, 19) Then, after Jesus had identified Himself, He gave them the commission. (John 20, 21) Luke deals with the same incident;¹ but he does not record this particular commission. He tells of Jesus' talk with the Emmaus disciples (Luke 24, 13-32), of their return to the rest of the disciples (Luke 24, 33-35), and of Jesus' appearance to the assembled group (Luke 24, 36-43). But Luke does add the additional historical note that "they (the

1. Robertson, Harmony, p. 245.

Emmaus disciples) ... returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them." (Luke 24, 33) Therefore, Christ must have appeared to and directed His bestowal of the Office of the Keys and the commission to more than the Eleven. This bestowal could not have been narrowed down to the Eleven unless He had said so explicitly; if it had been, Thomas' absence would have added a further complication.² The counter-argument, that the Apostles were a group apart by themselves and that therefore Christ meant them alone, has little to support it. Also the argument, that Jesus simply implied that the commission was to apply only to the Apostles,³ evidently does not give full credit to the parallel inspired record of Scripture, which indicates that others were present at the time of the commissioning; nor to the eternal foresight of Christ.

The appearance at which Christ gave the Great Commission is

2. But, as St. Luke is careful to inform us, with them were the others who then associated with them. This is of extreme importance, as marking that the words which the Risen Christ spoke on that occasion were addressed not to the Apostles as such - a thought forbidden also by the absence of Thomas - but to the Church, although it may be as personified and represented by such of the 'Twelve,' or rather 'Eleven,' as were present on the occasion.

Edersheim, op. cit., vol. II, p. 642.

It is a mistake to make the first gift of peace include all the disciples present, and then to say that the second gift refers only to the apostles in the company.

Lenski, op. cit., vol. III, p. 1344.

3. International Critical Commentary, vol. XXX, p. 677.

recorded twice in the Gospels. (Matt. 28, 16-20; Mark 16, 15-18⁴) In addition, Paul refers to this appearance in his great Resurrection chapter. (I Cor. 15) Among his proofs for the resurrection of our Lord, he states that "He was seen of over five hundred brethren at once." (I Cor. 15, 6)

That this is the same incident as the one of the Great Commission,⁵ is indicated by two statements in Matthew 28. In verse 16 we are told that the eleven disciples went to a place "where Jesus had appointed them." For Jesus to appear to five hundred disciples at once almost demanded some special appointment,⁶ particularly since Jesus did not appear to the general public after His Resurrection. He avoided the Pharisees and other unbelievers after His Resurrection. (Matt. 26, 64) That this appointment and the appearance to the five hundred are the same, seems at least very probable.

The other statement, closely allied to the first, is that recorded in Matt. 28, 17, that "some doubted." The Eleven had evidently been convinced of His Resurrection (John 20, 20.28) and therefore were not the ones who doubted. The expression, "some doubted," indicates that a larger number of people were at this particular mountain at the time,⁷ most probably, the "over five hundred brethren."

4. Some doubts have arisen on the genuineness of Mark 16, 9-18. The doubts are based on an extreme emphasis upon the Western texts. The writer considers it genuine, attested by the other regional texts. cf. Nestle, Eberhard, Novum Testamentum Graece, Editio sexta decima.

5. Robertson, Harmony, p. 249.

6. Ibid., p. 249, note.

7. Expositors' Greek Testament, vol. II, p. 920.

Furthermore, the fact that Matthew says that the eleven disciples went to the mountain which Jesus had appointed, does not by any means exclude the possibility that other people were there besides the eleven disciples; nor does it imply that the Great Commission was directed only to them. The expression, "some doubted," immediately precedes the commissioning, which was then directed to doubters and firm believers alike. Matthew's purpose in speaking of the Eleven specifically is probably to draw chief attention to these who had been Jesus' close companions and disciples throughout His ministry. For they, of course, would be expected to take the lead in the program of world evangelization. But it is impossible for us to support the claim that this Commission or its contemporary parallel in Mark were directed exclusively to the Eleven remaining disciples; much easier and sounder would it be to claim that Christ gave this task to all His erstwhile followers, even to those whose faith limped with doubt.

The situation in Luke 24, 46-49 and Acts 1, 8 is even more indefinite. At this point Luke does not keep the chronology clear; perhaps he felt that that matter was accurately managed by the earlier evangelists. He dates the first appearance of Jesus to the Eleven (Luke 24, 13.33.36) and then describes Jesus' other sayings and appearances in undated sequence. (Luke 24, 44-49) His repetition of the same thoughts in Acts 1, 8 in close connection with the Ascension would lead us to believe that both of

these incidents took place immediately before the Ascension.⁸ But this final commission was not given at the mount of Ascension, for Jesus charged them with it while they were assembled together. (Acts 1, 4) Then He led them out over against Bethany and ascended into heaven. (Luke 24, 50) Logically, we can conclude that He gave this commission to the same group who saw Him ascend. It is difficult to determine who were in that group. At least the Eleven were included.⁹ But Acts 1, 14 speaks of several women and Jesus' brethren who remained with the Eleven; that they were present at the Ascension, we are not told, but it seems at least probable. Again in Acts 1, 21 and 22 we are told that the requirements of Judas' successor were that he should have been a constant companion of Christ to the day of His Ascension. Two, Barsabas and Matthias, were chosen. (Acts 1, 23) Others may well have been eligible in this respect. While these men were not necessarily eye-witnesses of His Ascension, it appears more than likely that they were. If they were, this final commission probably was directed to them as well as to the Eleven. This final commission, then, was directed to more than the Eleven; the afore-mentioned indications point to that conclusion very strongly.

In this connection, we must turn to the account of Jesus'

8. Robertson, Harmony, p. 250.

9. All the Synoptic Gospels and Acts seem to imply at least that, "they" seems to indicate the Eleven or the Eleven and others.

sending out the Twelve during the period of His Galilean ministry. (Matt. 10; Mark 6, 7-13; Luke 9, 1-6) In this case, there is little doubt; Jesus sent out only the Twelve. Matthew even names them. (Matt. 10, 2-4) He endowed them with special powers and gave them specific instructions. But this commission had a strong "interim" nature. And, even more significantly, immediately before this interim commission, Jesus instructs the disciples: "Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth labourers into His harvest." (Matt. 9, 38) By this instruction He implies, at least, that the general task was not to be restricted to them alone.

Because of the interim nature of this task of the disciples, and because of the admonition to pray for more workers for that same task, we must conclude that Christ did not wish to make the Twelve His only witnesses. His later commission to the Seventy during His later Judean ministry (Luke 10, 1-16) emphasized this fact even more definitely. It is true that Christ had given more explicit instructions to the Twelve, that He formally invested them with more power.¹⁰ But it is also true that Christ gave the Seventy the commission to preach the Gospel, (Luke 10, 9) even though this was also an interim measure. To them, also, He urged the prayer that God would increase the workers in the harvest. (Luke 10, 2) They, too, were not to be the only messengers of the Gospel.

10. Edersheim, op. cit., vol. II, pp. 135-136.

Matthew's Great Commission brings up one more point in regard to the people to whom the mission command was extended. After giving the mission command and instructions, Jesus assures the disciples of His presence "even to the end of the world;" (Matt. 28, 20) "to the close of the age."¹¹ Whether, in their still rather unperceptive state (Acts 1, 6), the apostles realized the implication of this statement, or whether they confined its scope to their own lives, we cannot tell absolutely. But that Christ meant it for longer than that time, we can be sure, for the "age," if that is the translation, was the time intervening between His ascension and His return in glory. This would also be the implication with the translation, "world." The apostles evidently realized this, for almost immediately they raised the question about the time and nature of the end of the age, the coming of Christ's kingdom. (Acts 1, 6) What they did not know was how long the world would remain.

Since we accept this promise as extending to the disciples for a long time to come, for a longer time than the disciples then present would live, we are justified in assuming that Christ spoke this for later disciples, too. Those later disciples would not hear the Great Commission from His lips, but they would read its record in the books of His evangelists and know that it applied to them also.

11. Revised Standard Version, p. 72.

The upshot of our study of the pre-Resurrection commissions is this: We must be very careful not to generalize from these interim measures of Christ. But even if we do, we will only fortify the thesis that the commission extended to all of Christ's disciples and not the Twelve or the Eleven alone. The post-Resurrection commissions are, of course, the basis for this conclusion. They conclusively apply the mission command to more than the Eleven.

The Recipients of the Message

Our third question is: Whom was this call to influence? Where were the apostles commissioned to go and to whom were they supposed to bring their message? What effect, if any, was their nationalistic preference to have on the scope and area of their work?

Four of the five commissions to the disciples make this matter very clear. "All nations," (Matt. 28, 19) "every creature," (Mark 16, 15)¹ "all nations, beginning at Jerusalem," (Luke 24, 47) "in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." (Acts 1, 8) The other passage does not deal with this problem, but its statement, "whosoever," admits of no limitations. (John 20, 23) In these passages, Christ makes it very clear that he wished the message of the Apostles to reach all people. In each of them, He includes a strong universal note.

Several problems call for our attention. The word, "nation," $\epsilon\lambda\lambda\eta\eta$ in the Greek² and דָּוָר in the Hebrew,³ had received the

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1. Revised Standard Version has "the whole creation."
 2. cf. Thayer, E., Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, p. 168, col. 2.
 3. Harkavy, A., Hebrew and Chaldee Dictionary, p. 82.

technical meaning, Gentiles. But Christ did not rule out the Jews; for He included them in the instructions to begin in Jerusalem, the very stronghold of Jewry. (Luke 24, 47; Acts 1, 8)

Of all these passages, the one recorded in Mark 16, 15 is the strongest. It apparently goes beyond the realm of humanity in its scope of mission command. In it Christ instructs the disciples to preach the Gospel to "every creature."⁴ In spite of the parallel to Romans 8, 21, in which the deliverance of all creation is referred to - but not the evangelization of more than men - the interpretation is better that in this passage Christ uses a vivid picture to bring out the complete and uncompromising universality of His commission to His Apostles.

"The uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1, 8) has been the subject of some interesting speculation. What did Christ mean with this phrase? Did He mean the uttermost part of the then-known world, or of the entire world? Some commentators suggest Rome as the uttermost part of the earth.⁵ The disciples may have understood this to be the meaning when the Lord gave them this

4. The interpretation of this passage has caused much disagreement.

We find no reason to limit ... this phrase to the conception "all men" ... com. Rom. 8, 21. Lange-Schaff, op. cit., vol. XVIII, p. 161.

πᾶσι τῇ κτίσει gives more emphatic expression to the universal destination of the Gospel than Mts.

Expositors' Greek Testament, vol. I, p. 456.

5. The uttermost part of the earth may possibly indicate Rome, for that capital of the world represented all the known nations of the earth. Lange-Schaff, op. cit., vol. XX, p. 16.

Expositors' Greek Testament, vol. II, p. 57.

command, although we have no definite indication that they did. But to claim that Jesus meant Rome exclusively militates against the unity of Scripture. It is true, this interpretation would round out the book of the Acts beautifully, for then the command of Christ would have been literally fulfilled at the close of the book;⁶ but the parallel passages dealing with the utter universality of the mission command far outweigh this argument. "To the uttermost part of the earth" retains its natural meaning of a universal commission.

Luke 24, 47 has a rather violent grammatical usage in "beginning at Jerusalem."⁷ Evidently, it is necessary to supply "that ye should preach" before the phrase in question. While this matter is not vital to the discussion, our interpretation does connect this phrase with the command and not merely with a prediction of our Lord.

But what is the relation of these passages to the earlier commissions of Christ to the Twelve and to the Seventy? (Matt. 10, 1-42; Mark 6, 7-13; Luke 9, 1-6; Luke 10, 1-16) To them He gave a definitely restricted scope of activity. He sent them only to the people of Israel and not even to the Samaritans. (Matt. 10, 5-6) (Luke 10, 1) How do we know that these commands were to supersede the earlier commands?

6. Expositors' Greek Testament, vol. II, p. 57

7. It is difficult to decide between taking this as a rather violent anacolouthon, as if "that ye should preach" had preceded, and making it the beginning of a new sentence, "Beginning from Jerusalem ye are witnesses of these things." The former is perhaps better.
International Critical Commentary, Luke, p. 563.
 cf. Expositors' Greek Testament, vol. I, p. 650.
 Nestle, op. cit., p. 229.

In Matt. 10, 5-6 Jesus tells the twelve disciples not to go "into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans." But rather He commanded them to go to "the lost sheep of the house of Israel." In the parallel passages, dealing with the sending of the Twelve, He does not repeat this injunction; but in Luke 10, 1 He sends them into "every city and place whither He Himself would come."

It is difficult for us to determine the relationship between these two passages; but since the disciples, both the twelve and the seventy, are given similar commands (Matt. 10, 7; Luke 10, 9) and exercise similar powers, (Matt. 10, 1; Luke 10, 17) it is no doubt valid for us to conclude that their purposes were generally the same. Accordingly we may state that the disciples were to precede Christ in His journeys and for that purpose were to confine their activities to the people of Israel, with whom He Himself was primarily concerned during His lifetime.⁸ This injunction then was temporary in nature; it was a directive to be heralds for the Lord Himself.

But even in the restricting words in Matthew, Christ gives a hint that they are not to be permanently binding.⁹ The way in

8. The reason for Christ's dealing primarily with the Jews is another matter with which we cannot deal here.

9. The very prohibition implies a consciousness that one day the Gospel would go the way of the Gentiles. Expositors' Greek Testament, vol. 1, p. 159.

which He emphasizes them to the disciples implies that they are meant to be only a temporary and general exception to the prophecies of the universality of the Gospel, prophecies from the prophets (e.g. Isaiah 55, 5) and prophecies spoken during Christ's own life-time on earth, (e.g. Luke 2, 10.32; John 3, 16).

The implication of that consciousness was clearly stated in Christ's words of His final commission, words which sent His disciples into all parts of the world. No matter how restrictive the earlier instructions of Jesus might have been, this command superseded them and set them aside, not as error, but as a principle that was the Savior's will earlier, but not in accordance with the Savior's will for His disciples' future work.¹⁰ But we must use care when we speak of the universal commission as a new feature. It is a new feature if we compare the two commissions. But to say that Christ first introduced the universal aspect into His work at the time of the Great Commission is faulty.¹¹ That the Old Testament Scriptures spoke frequently of the universality of the Gospel cannot be denied. It would take us too far afield to go into that matter. But Christ Himself was

10. With these words - and this is the new feature in the present instructions - the previous prohibition, x, 5, was cancelled, and the apostolic mission declared to be a mission to the whole world. Meyer, H. A. W., Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the Gospel of Matthew, vol. II, p. 301.

11. The obligation of the Apostles to make other men into disciples of Christ was not new ... Nor was it new that the Apostolic commission and Christ's own commission which He initiated through the Apostles should be spread out over all humankind. (Translation) Zahn, op. cit., vol. I, p. 714.

fully conscious of the universality of His work and impressed the same upon His disciples. Already in the earliest part of His ministry, in the night when Jesus was speaking with Nicodemus, He spoke of the "world" which God loved so much that He sent His Son to die for it. (John 3, 16) To His disciples who wondered at His approaching the woman of Samaria with the Gospel, Jesus spoke of the whitening harvest among those very Samaritans whom He later excluded from His temporary commission to the twelve. (John 4, 35) In His sermon on the mount, Jesus again spoke of the earth and of the world without any restriction to the Jewish nation. (Matt. 5, 13-16) In His encounter with the centurion of Capernaum, He praised that Gentile's faith and spoke of the salvation of heathen nations. (Matt. 8, 10-11) The parable of the Mustard Seed strongly implied the coming of the Gospel and of the Kingdom to the Gentiles. (Matt. 13, 31-32) All these sayings of Jesus occurred before His commission to the twelve or to the seventy.¹² That is why we must maintain that the universality of the commission was nothing new when it came, and that the earlier commissions were definitely temporary in their scope.

But Christ continued to speak of a universal Kingdom and a universal Gospel. To the Syro-Phoenician woman He told His primary object of preaching to the Jews, but He gladly answered her request. (Mark 7, 27-30) At a later date, before His later

12. cf. Robertson, Harmony, pp. 25-80 on sequence of events.

Judean ministry, Jesus commissioned disciples to go ahead of Him into Samaria to prepare the people for Him. Though the Samaritans did not wish to accept Jesus, He still desired their conversion and let His disciples know that desire of His in no uncertain terms. (Luke 9, 51-56) In His discourse on the Good Shepherd, Jesus spoke of "other sheep" whom He would still bring into His fold. (John 10, 16) His parable of the Great Supper considered those who would replace the rebellious Jews at the feast of heaven. (Luke 14, 16-24) His joy at having the Greeks come to see Him further develops our understanding of His desire to have all men saved. (John 12, 20-23)

In His closing discourses Jesus speaks of the final sign of the end of the world, the preaching of the Gospel in all the world. (Mark 13, 10; Matt. 24, 14) Perhaps He was adding another encouragement to His disciples to do this work of world missions by placing this goal before them, the goal of bringing the end of the world closer through universal Gospel preaching. Whatever His motive, His statement is clear; the Gospel must be preached in all the world.

Perhaps one of the most interesting indications of the place of Gospel universality in Jesus' teaching comes out in the story of the woman anointing His feet in the house of Simon, the Leper. (Matt. 26, 6-13; Mark 14, 3-9) When the disciples complain about the waste of money, Jesus rebukes them and commends the woman. Then He adds, "Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the

whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial to her." (Matt. 26, 13; Mark 14, 9) He gives no command here; He doesn't even predict anything like the universality of the Gospel; He just takes it for granted. What more cogent proof could we ask that the Gospel is meant for all men, and that Christ had this in mind long before He entered upon the suffering that would make that Gospel possible at all?¹³

To return to the claim that the universality of the Gospel as urged in Matthew 28 was not a new thing for Christ or the disciples, we see that the Gospels are literally packed with direct statements about the Gospel's significance for the world. Far too numerous to mention are the indirect references to this fact in Christ's words and in the general context of His statements and actions. But, on the basis of the Gospel record, we should be entirely safe in claiming that from the very outset of His ministry Christ thought of the news of salvation as something for all men. All restrictions which He placed on His disciples were for the sake of fulfilling the tasks immediately before Him, that of preaching primarily to the Jews.

In two records of His final commission, Christ tells the disciples to begin at Jerusalem and to expand from that point. (Luke 24, 47; Acts 1, 8) Why does He say this? Much modern interpretation, at least in practice, seems to use this as an

13. Expositors' Greek Testament, vol. I, p. 309.

argument for remaining in the home territory until it has been covered and evangelized, if not converted.

The opinion of the present writer is that this is purely a practical command to the disciples. Christ did not expect them to go^{to} the far parts of the earth posthaste; that would have been practical folly. First they were to establish a mission base in Jerusalem, from which they could spread out farther and farther, to Judea, to Samaria, to the uttermost part of the earth. Perhaps they thought back to Christ's predictions about Jerusalem and hesitated to take that as their base. (Matt. 24, 2) Christ settled that question for them with His command. He gave them this intensely practical command to start in the city and spread out from there. But to claim that here was a command of Christ to evangelize the Jews first, primarily because of some prior claim they had to the Gospel or on the affections of the Jewish disciples is untenable and disagrees strongly with the idea of universal grace. Rather, it was practical to approach the Jews first, in Jerusalem or elsewhere, because they knew well the background to the Gospel in the Old Testament and could become an indoctrinated nucleus for the new church.

Finally, again, we must mention the statement of Christ that He would be with the disciples until the end of the world. (Matt. 28, 20) As in the questions concerning the ones who were sent, so in this question concerning the ones who are to be evangelized,

the command must be extended beyond the lives of the disciples up to our present day and until the day of Judgment, when Christ will end this world. The "nations" concerned, then, are the nations today and the nations that will exist until Judgment Day, as well as the nations of Christ's time.

In summary, we may say that Christ's command was universal; the Gospel was to go to all men; any restrictions that He placed on this universality were purely for practical purposes, never for the purpose of placing one nation higher in the rank of potential believers than another. For Him, God loved all the world; therefore He sent His disciples out into all the world.

The Message

We have spoken rather extensively of the basis of the mission command, of the people who are commissioned, and of the people who are to be affected by the commission. But in doing this, we have not spoken of the actual burden of the commission. We have used such terms as bringing the Gospel to people, telling them of the grace of God. This raises another question. What did Christ tell the commissioned disciples to do for these people whom they were to contact? What was the burden of the message of these disciples to all nations of the world? And how were they to convey that message to people?

This particular section of our discussion will not deal with mission methods; that is beyond the scope of the present paper. But it is necessary to consider just what Christ commanded the commissioned disciples to tell the people whom they were to approach. Not the method, but the content of their message, plus a few points on the approach that the commissions emphasize, are germane to our discussion.

Christ tells His disciples: "Go and teach ... teaching,"¹ (Matt. 28, 19-20) "preach the Gospel," (Mark 16, 15) "Repentance

1. Revised Standard Version has, "make disciples of."

and remission of sins should be preached in His name ... ye are witnesses of these things," (Luke 24, 47-48) "Remit and retain sins," (John 20, 23) "Ye shall be witnesses of Me." (Acts 1, 8)

Briefly, Christ gives His disciples instructions to do their work by word of mouth, by instruction. Not one word that He says indicates that they might use some other means than telling others of the message He had given them; of course this testifying would take the form of the witness of the Christian life, (cf. Matt. 5, 16) but Christ does not emphasize or refer to that here. In these passages He indicates no method of force or politics to bring people into the Kingdom of God.

The words which Christ uses are indicative of a general method which is of great importance to us. That method is one of direct and positive witnessing to the truth of the Gospel. As we notice the terms that Christ uses, "preach," "make disciples of," "teach," "witness," we realize that these men were to bring a new thing to the people of their times. This was not to be a matter of national reform, of comparison and mutual sharing of cultures and religious experiences, but the proclamation of a message to people who knew nothing of it.²

2. To share the Gospel is not biblical terminology. In relation to the Messiah of the Old Testament and the Gospel message of the New Testament the words used more than one hundred and forty times are: bashara, "to tell good tidings;" diaggello, "to announce;" kataggello, "to tell thoroughly;" evangelizo, "to spread good news;" laleo, "to talk or preach;" and most frequently, kerusso, "to herald or proclaim." The idea of "sharing" is foreign to the New Testament vocabulary in relation to the message of salvation.

Zwemer, op. cit., p. 28.

Perhaps one of the most interesting facts about this phase of the mission command is that it is a command to convey a message that has first been given to those commissioned. In this respect the word, "witness," used in Luke and Acts, is particularly interesting. In Luke, the disciples are spoken of as witnessing to His death and His resurrection, and in Acts, as being witnesses of Christ. Thus, the disciples were to testify to the deeds of Christ and to testify to Him Himself in their work.³ They were not expected to do new things or to set up new ethical standards, or to strike happy mediums or to found societies; they were merely to testify to the Lord and to His works. Their material was given to them; that material was the Lord and the great acts which He had done, chiefly His suffering and resurrection. (Luke 24, 46) But more of this matter later. The chief point is that the disciples were sent as witnesses, or testifiers; their material was given to them in Christ and in His works.

"Preach" (Mark 16, 15; Luke 24, 47) and "teach" (Matt. 28, 20) are two other expressions which Christ used; they, too, are loaded with meaning. The former, κηρύσσειν in the Greek, denotes a public proclamation of a message from someone else, as, for example, the proclamation of a royal edict by a herald.⁴ The latter indicates a more personal and intense idea of complete instruction; but the idea of a public and general message is

3. Thayer, op. cit., p. 393.

4. Ibid., p. 346.

maintained in the term, *διδάσκω* in the Greek.⁵ This latter term is used frequently to refer to Christ's public ministry among the people of Israel. Two thoughts present themselves from these two terms; the first that the witnessing is to be public, to groups of people together. Perhaps here we have another less direct reference to the universal nature of the Great Commission. At any rate, we have a very strong indication that the Gospel is to be made known publicly and generally. Another thought of considerable importance is the emphasis on the oral nature of the spread of the Gospel. In all these cases, and especially in these two expressions, the personal, oral approach is strongly implied. Of course, it is true, the other means of spreading the Gospel, by written word and by representative, are not forbidden; but neither are they commanded or urged. Therefore it is certainly valid for us to infer from these expressions the vital importance of personal testimony in the spread of the Gospel and the deep effectiveness of the spoken word in that work. We could well refer to many practical demonstrations of this very fact, but they also are beyond the realm of this paper.

Perhaps the best indication of the close personal relationship and effect in the commission is contained in the expression *μαθητεύσειν*, best translated "to make disciples."⁶ Such a process,

5. Ibid., p. 144

6. Vincent, Mr. R., Word Studies in the New Testament, vol. I, p. 149.

the message of which we will discuss later, would demand a very close relationship between the man commissioned to make the disciple and the man who is to be the disciple. A hint of that close relationship comes to us from the relationship of the twelve to the Savior.

A final cogent indication of the intimate nature of this commission is demonstrated by Jesus' command to the disciples concerning their power to forgive sins. (John 20, 23) Here a tremendous responsibility and privilege was laid upon the commissioned disciples, a responsibility that dealt with the very basic problem of eternal life or death. Such was the personal, direct nature of the work to which the Savior commissioned them. For such a work, the direct spoken word was by far the best; that spoken word Christ emphasized as the vehicle for this soul-saving message.

But what was the message? What were they to convey with their direct, spoken messages to people? In our key references, Jesus tells His disciples to "teach them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you," (Matt. 28, 20) "preach the Gospel," (Mark 16, 15) "Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things," (Luke 24, 46-48) "remit and retain sins," (John 20, 23) and "ye shall be witnesses unto Me." (Acts 1,8)

These Scripture references at first glance seem to be different in a number of ways. Perhaps, there seems to be little similarity among them. But one fact stands out boldly; Christ places Himself at the center of the message in each case. In the commands recorded in Luke and Acts, this is particularly evident. The entire burden of the message in Luke is "in His name." In the Acts reference the disciples are simply commanded to be "witnesses of Me." The Luke passage also provides an excellent commentary on the other passages. In Luke 24, 46-48 Christ's suffering, death, and resurrection are closely connected with the spread of repentance and the remission of sins; repentance and remission of sins are closely tied up to His name.⁷

In short, all these concepts are brought into close connection with Christ. In the Mark reference Christ tells the disciples to preach the Gospel, or, which is the same thing, the news that the sins of the world are forgiven through Him. In the John passage, the remitting and retaining of sins take the center of attention. When we realize the close integral relationship which Jesus sets up in Luke 24 between Himself and the Gospel of the forgiveness of sins, we need but take one logical step to realize that Christ, in these passages of Mark

7. It is, first of all, a *κήρυγμα ἐπ' ὀνόματι Ἰησ.*, that is, a preaching which takes place on the basis of this name, and therefore borrows the significance and authority from Him in whose name and in whose commission it takes place.

Lange-Schaff, op. cit., vol. XVIII, p. 400.

and John also, is setting Himself up as the center of the message of His disciples. We might apply the same reasoning to Matthew 28, 19-20, but that passage itself points to the centrality of Christ in the words: "All things whatsoever I have commanded you." Again, we might adduce copious Scripture proof to demonstrate that Christ is really the central figure in all the teaching of missionaries; but our texts at hand make it sufficiently clear and leave little room for question about the center of the commissioned disciples' message.

Of all these statements of the message which the disciples are to spread to the world, that statement recorded in Acts 1 is the tersest and yet the most complete. There Jesus merely says: "Be witnesses unto Me." A better translation of this is: "My witnesses."⁸ This latter translation adds something to the thought of Jesus' statement.⁹ Jesus brings out two points. First the disciples are to be witnesses to the things that Jesus has done, His life on earth, His miracles, His kindnesses, and, above all, His suffering and death for men's sins with the ensuing, triumphant resurrection. The meaning of these epochal happenings are part of the message, of course. All this would be contained in the expression, "witnesses unto me." But all this and more are contained in the expression, "my witnesses."

8. Expositors' Greek Testament, vol. II, p. 57.
Revised Standard Version, p. 250.

Nestle has μου not μου.
 9. Expositors' Greek Testament, vol. II, p. 57.

A closer relation is set up between Jesus and His disciples in this expression; they are speaking as His representatives; when they speak, He is speaking through them. This comes close to expressing union of the Savior with those who are commissioned by Him.

Luke's record of the mission command also considers the disciples as witnesses; but in this case, Jesus approaches the matter from a slightly different angle. Instead of speaking of the disciples as His witnesses, He speaks of them as witnesses of the things which He has done, particularly His suffering and death. This passage, though it does not deny, does not bring out the close personal relationship of the witnesses to their Lord.¹⁰ On the other hand, an interesting parallel is struck in this instance; Christ first refers to the prophets who spoke of Him before He came; then He gives a command to the apostles to tell others of Him in the future. Although He does not make the parallel explicit, we are, no doubt, correct in inferring here a close parallel between the work of the Old Testament prophets and their message and the work and message of the newly commissioned apostles.

The central thought of this passage is that "repentance and remission of sins should be preached." To this thought the statement in Mark, "preach the Gospel," and the command in John concerning the remitting of sins drive close parallels; in fact,

10. Ibid.

they are practically identical to it. The whole chain of prophetic thought, brought out by our Lord in Luke 24, explains the meaning of "Gospel," "remission," etc.. Christ came into the world, suffered for the sins of men, died, and rose again; this sequence of events sealed the forgiveness of sins to the entire world. That the world might receive that forgiveness, Christ sent His disciples out with the message of the Gospel, the news of that fact of His suffering, death, and resurrection. It is one glorious circle; Christ died; men were saved; Christ sent His disciples to tell men that He had died and that they were saved. Its simplicity is utterly obvious.

But in the Great Commission, recorded in Matthew, Christ says more. There he says, "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." This passage poses something of a problem. Isn't Christ recommending legislation in this case? Where does He include the Gospel in these matters that He has commanded to His disciples?

Cermane to the discussion of this problem is the question of the connotation of the words, "observe" and "command." The word, "observe," *τηρειν* in the original, is translated best in just that way.¹¹ It comes from the Greek word which meant originally; to guard, to watch. In its usus loquendi the word has lost that exact meaning, at least as applied to military

11. Revised Standard Version, p. 72.

matters; but some of that thought remains in the New Testament usage. The implication is: to consider as valuable, to keep with respect, to obey. But the meaning, "to obey," is perhaps too strong for this term, since the term implies more respect than obedience.¹² Therefore we retain the translation, observe, with the reservation that it includes a respect and honor, rather than a slavish observance.

"Command" is ἐντέλλω in the original. Again, command is the best translation.¹³ At most we can weaken the force of the word to "enjoin." The work itself definitely carries the connotation of commanding as in any legislation.¹⁴ But whether in this instance we must press the term is another matter. This commanding may well indicate the giving of instructions which Christ tendered to His followers. Since "all things" are included, it may also include such evangelical commands as the command to believe and accept Christ.

At most, we can conclude that these commands which the newly-made disciples of Jesus were to observe are directives of Christ, and their observance was to be one of respectful and willing obedience. But that they were commands and that they demanded observance, we cannot deny. How is this consistent with the promise of grace in the Gospel which Christ gives as the

12. Thayer, op. cit., p. 622.

13. Revised Standard Version, p. 72.

14. Thayer, op. cit., p. 218.

material for preaching and witnessing in the other accounts of His commissions to the disciples?

First of all, two other expressions occur in this passage which definitely include the use of the Gospel. The first is *μαθητεύειν*, to make disciples of.¹⁵ In order to make His own disciples, Jesus impressed upon them primarily the promises of the Gospel. Now His disciples were in turn to make other disciples; how better could they do that than to follow their Lord's method? This term demands the inclusion of the Gospel.

The second term is *διδάσκειν*, to teach. As we have observed before, this term implies a close personal relationship between the teacher and the one teaching. But the important fact is that this teaching is to result in this, that those who are taught are able to observe, or obey, if we will, the commands of the Savior. In order to gain this obedience, the teaching must center about the Gospel. That fact of the necessity of the Gospel and faith in it for obedience, or good works, Jesus Himself brings out in such discourses as the Vine and the Branches (John 15, 1-10) and the Good and Evil Fruit Trees. (Matt. 7, 15-20)

This Great Commission, then is in part a type of metonymy. Jesus does not state directly just what the message of the apostles

15. This program includes making disciples of learners (matheteusate) such as they were themselves. That means evangelism in the fullest sense.
Robertson, A. T., Word Pictures in the New Testament, vol. I, p. 244.

is to be. But He does tell them what the end result is to be: the observance of all His commands by His new disciples. In order to gain that end result, the apostles will have to use the Gospel as the basis and power and the Law as the guide-line of behavior. But the parallel commissions leave no doubt in our minds as to what the message is to be. In none of the commissions is there a hint of a contradiction of another; any difference in the content of the commanded message is either an expansion, an explanation, or an emphasis on one particular phase of that content. The content of the message is the Gospel; that is the message. The Law will enter in, of course; the commissions don't deny that. But the Law is definitely an alien element which prepares for and follows that chief message of the Gospel.

The commissions of the Matthew and Mark Gospels add another element to their commands, that of Baptism. Again we must emphasize the fact that omission of this thought by Luke and John does not constitute a contradiction but simply implies that Christ did not see fit to repeat this very simple and very evident phase of the mission command.

Matthew gives us the sedes doctrinae for the command to baptize; in Mark it is not directly commanded but taken for granted. In Matthew Christ says that His apostles are to "make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you."

Our first question is, What is the relation of Baptism to the rest of the program of evangelization? The Matthew text sheds some light on this matter. The general program is one of making disciples; to fulfill this program two steps are necessary. The subjects must be baptized and they must be taught. But we would not be justified in making those moves correlative, making Baptism subject to previous instruction or vice versa, for a correlating καί is absent.¹⁶ Our conclusion then is that Baptism and teaching are both necessary processes for the evangelization of the nations. Their order of sequence, their relationship to each other, is not fixed in this passage. These must be governed by other circumstances.^m But roughly we may say that Baptism comes first, instruction second.¹⁷ But to say that antecedent Baptism rules out any preparatory instruction in people who can receive it is just as untenable as the claim that instruction is absolutely necessary in preparation for Baptism. The normal procedure will be Baptism, with what preparatory instruction is necessary and possible, and then instruction for the purpose of building up the Christian life.¹⁸

16. We should not overlook that here is no καί before διδάσκοντες so that baptizing and teaching are not strictly coordinate, as two successive acts and means of Christianizing the nations.

Lange-Schaff, op. cit., vol. XVII, p. 557.

17. Ibid., p. 558.

18. διδάσκοντες teaching them, present participle, implying that Christian instruction is to be a continuous process, not subordinate to and preparing for baptism, but continuing after baptism with a view to enabling disciples to walk worthily of their vocation.

International Critical Commentary, Matthew, vol. XXVI, p. 340.

In Matthew Jesus commands Baptism. That makes it compulsory to the evangelizing disciples. But in Mark He makes the point even clearer. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, he that believeth not shall be damned." Our logical inferences are obvious; faith and Baptism are necessary to salvation, unbelief damns. Even a baptized unbeliever will be damned. But what of the unbaptized believer? While we do not intend to deal at length with the question of the necessity of Baptism to salvation, we do wish to find out what this text has to say about it.¹⁹ Jesus here deals with the natural sequence of events. Naturally, when the command of Matthew 28, 19 is carried out, the believer will be baptized. If he is a believer and is baptized, or, to put it in the other words of Christ, if he has become a disciple,²⁰ then he will be saved. If he refuses to believe, he will be damned. With that case, rare indeed, in which a man comes to faith, but dies before he is baptized, Christ does not deal in this passage. This is a mission command, not a solution for problems of casuistry. Neither does Christ here deal with the mode of Baptism.

But a further important point is its significance. Here opinions are varied again. Many commentators interpret the

19. Baptism is not named along with faith as in itself an indispensable matter, but as the natural, certainly, also necessary consequence of faith; because baptism indicates the entering of the believer into the communion of the believing Church.

Lange-Schaff, op. cit., vol. XVIII, p. 161.

20. Weiss, B., Commentary on New Testament, vol. I, p. 251.
Expositors' Greek Testament, vol. I, p. 339.

expression "in the name of" to indicate a setting up of a close communion between the believer and God.²¹

The word most frequently pressed for this meaning is the preposition ἐῖς in, or into. Since this frequently indicates a motion toward or into,²² the commentators seem to conclude that this requires a setting up of a communion with God. But this translation is not necessary. The preposition in, a word denoting position rather than motion is also admissible, and, in this case, preferable.²³

Granted that the commentators should beware of falling into the error of making the formula merely a matter or dead rote, this is not merely a set of words which give a validity to the sprinkling of water; few, if any, people have said that, although they may have thought that way in practice. But the commentators who assume that this formula must imply the setting up of

21. The words rather mean baptizing into the fellowship of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost and describe not the formula to be used at baptism, but the end and aim which should be secured in and through baptism.
International Critical Commentary, Matthew, vol. XXVI, p. 307.

Baptizing into the name of the Holy Trinity implies a spiritual and mystical union with them.
Vincent, op. cit., vol. I, p. 149.

22. Thayer, op. cit., pp. 183-185.

23. In itself, ἐῖς expresses the same dimension relation as viz. in. It does not of itself mean into, or unto, or to. That is the resultant idea of the accusative case with verbs of motion.

Robertson, A. T., A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research, p. 591.

But in Mt. 28, 19 ... the notion of sphere is the true one.

Ibid., p. 592.

a communion relationship between the believer and the Trinity, are guilty of excluding an important and valid middle.

That middle is that the baptized believer takes upon himself the name of the Trinity; by this act he calls himself by the name of the Trinity; he becomes a Christian, or, in line with the text, a Trinitarian.²⁴

A further argument for this "middle" solution is that the believer is not baptized into the Father, etc., but into the name of the Father, etc. If this is to mean communion with the Trinity, why is the word "name" interposed?²⁵ Rather does this passage imply the assumption of the name of the Trinity, the name, Christian, or Trinitarian, with all its implications. For this interpretation, the translation of the Greek word, *εἰς*, to "in" or "into" does not affect the meaning.

Of course we cannot deny that when a person is baptized into Christ he puts on Christ, (Gal. 3, 27) and that this putting on Christ denotes a very close union between the believer and his Lord. But that fact and the question whether this passage says that fact are two entirely different matters. The writer's opinion is that this passage says more than that. It says that the believer is baptized and takes the name Christian, Trinitarian, which also includes "putting on Christ."

24. *εἰς τὸ ὄνομα* into the name, i.e., as confessing the name which embodies the essence of the Christian creed.

25. Expositors' Greek Testament, vol. I, p. 340. It must be admitted that *ὄνομα θεοῦ* is at times used interchangeably with *θεός*.

Baptism, then, is a vital part of the mission command. It is the sacrament through which the new believer gains his entrance into the church. It is the natural means of entrance and is necessary, for Christ commanded it. Its significance is this, that the recipient takes upon himself the name of the Trinity with all the implications of that name.

The message which the apostles of Christ are to bring to the world is one of Him. It is a message that He has saved men from sin and won them for a new life in Him. The message uses words and men as vehicles with the means of the Gospel and the Sacrament of Baptism, the initiating sacrament for the new disciple.

The Power

A final question arises in our mind. What promise of success and of help does Christ give to the newly commissioned disciples? What will be the result of this preaching of the Gospel? What help will he provide that they may be able to carry on this work without weakening?

To the first question we can find only a puzzling answer. Jesus in these commissions does not promise any success in converting people. In the Mark commission he indicates that "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." (Mark 16, 16) In connection with the command in John, He says, "Whosoever sins ye remit they are remitted unto them." (John 20, 23) The other records of the command do not deal with the subject at all. But these two statements about the salvation of the believers indicate that there will be some who will accept the message. But nothing is said of their number or eagerness or gratefulness. On the contrary, in each case the unbelievers come up for consideration, too. Damnation is threatened to them in Mark and the retention of their sins, tantamount to damnation, is their lot in John. To call these statements promises of success is overstating the case, to say the least. At best we can call

them promises of a greater or lesser response to the Gospel message. In addition, the charismatic gifts promised to the believers, (Mark 16, 17-18) gifts which gave them miraculous powers, say nothing of the number of believers, but merely mention the gifts that believers will have. Of all five references, the Mark commission has the most in the matter of promises of success; even in it, Jesus steers completely clear of any promises of phenomenal success in making converts or of setting up Christian nations. Elsewhere in Scripture (e.g. Isaiah 55) success is promised to the work of the Gospel. But in these commissions Christ does not mention it directly at all.

In regard to this matter, we may well turn to the earlier, temporary commission of the twelve, recorded in Matthew 10. As in His later commissions, He tells them where to go, (Matt. 10, 5-6) what to say and do, (Matt. 10, 7-15) and then He tells them of the attitude that men will take toward them. (Matt. 10, 16-39) He warns them that they will not receive any wholesale acceptance of their message; they will experience deadly opposition to their preaching.

From these facts one conclusion is evidently valid. Christ did not expect the number of converts to be the main reason for the disciples to continue their work. If He had, He would at least have emphasized this part of the mission work when He gave the command. But the success of the apostles' work, as

we generally term success, did not once directly enter into the five commissions and two temporary commissions which we have considered in this paper.

But the question concerning the promise of help is an entirely different matter. Here Christ gives a tremendous amount of encouragement to the commissioned disciples. "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." (Matt. 28, 20) "Behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you; but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem until ye be endued with power from on high." (Luke 24, 49) "He breathed on them and said, Receive ye the Holy Ghost." (John 20, 22) "Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you." (Acts 1, 8)

Here we have an interesting combination. Matthew records Christ's promise that He will be with His disciples personally. Luke speaks of the promise of the Father, in his Gospel. John, and Luke in the Acts, speak of the Holy Ghost as the source of this strength that the apostles will need.

This gives us another example of the mystery of the Trinity. All three persons of the Trinity are mentioned here. Two, the Son and the Spirit, are directly mentioned as being in close communion with the commissioned disciples. This act of being with the believers and imbuing them with strength is a work correctly assigned to the entire Trinity and not only to one person.¹ Thus, too, Christ spoke of the union of Himself with

1. Zahn, op. cit., vol. I, p. 716.

the believer in the discourse on the Vine and the Branches, (John 15, 1-10) and yet referred to the Comforter who would testify of Him. (John 15, 26-27) Farther than this we cannot go; suffice it to say that Christ promised to be with the believers, and that He also promised the presence of the Comforter, the Holy Spirit.

Far more important for the fulfillment of the commission was the meaning of this presence of God with the commissioned disciples. What was this to mean to them in the future? In the Great Commission recorded in Matthew Christ assures His followers of His continuing presence with them. These are the closing words of the Gospel of Matthew. Immediately or shortly after saying these words, Christ ascended into heaven and withdrew His visible presence from the disciples. We can well imagine what wonderings might have gone through their minds, had He not given them this assurance of His abiding presence. How miserably they had failed and how weak they had been when they were away from Him in the past three years. (cf. Mark 4, 36-41; Matt. 17, 16; Matt. 26, 56; John 20, 19) And now they were to face a permanent, visible separation from Him. They needed some sort of assurance and one of real, powerful value.

Since all of these passages deal with the same Trinity and also with the same power for the same purpose, we are justified in taking them as commentaries on one another. It is impossible for us to make an accurate distinction between the presence of

Christ and the gift of the Holy Spirit, at least for the practical purpose of their working and their effect.

In Matthew Jesus promises His continual presence with His disciples to the end of the world. In itself, this might have been only a moral presence, a presence which assured them that they were working in line with His will. But the context definitely demands more than that. For Christ to base the power for an entire mission command upon a mere moral presence and approval would seem inadequate. Moreover, His previous words had already indicated the moral presence. (Matt. 28, 19)

Much more is necessary; much more is meant: a spiritual presence is implied.² Perhaps we can best explain this by the situation. Christ was about to leave the disciples. He would ascend into heaven. Lest they should be discouraged by this apparent departure of His and in order that they might have strength for their mission, Christ told them that He would be with them. Without doubt, He meant to say that His presence would be just as real and just as complete as if He were to be visible to them for the remainder of the earth's existence. That was to be His "spiritual" presence. That was the presence of the Fourth Gospel. (cf. John 15, 1-10)

The references in Luke, John, and the Acts refer to the work of the Holy Spirit. In John and in the Acts, the passages

2. A spiritual presence of Christ similar to that spoken of in the Fourth Gospel. Expositors' Greek Testament, vol. I, p. 340.

mention the Holy Spirit directly. In Luke the Spirit is referred to as a promise of the Father and source of power. To identify the Holy Spirit we may look at the command in Acts 1, 8, in which the power is mentioned as originating from the Holy Spirit. Or we may consider John 14, 16, in which Jesus refers to the Father as giving another Comforter to the disciples. He was to be the source of power for the commissioned apostles, not a source of divine manufacture, but God Himself, the Third Person of the Trinity.

In regard to the Holy Spirit, it is interesting to note that when the "Lord Jesus breathed on His disciples and said unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost," (John 20, 22) the word *ἐμφυσᾶω* used for "breathe" appears for the only time in New Testament literature. It is used in the Septuagint to express God's "breathing" the breath of life into Adam.³ Perhaps it is significant that God used this means to bring life to the crown of His creation and that Christ used this means also to equip His disciples for their world campaign of evangelization. We must be careful not to press this too far, for we deal with a number of tentative suppositions, e.g., that the correspondence is a designed one, that the word *ἐμφυσᾶω* was loaded with special meaning by its early use in that translation document, the Septuagint. Let us permit it to stand as an interesting observation.

3. Lange-Schaff, op. cit., vol. XIX, p. 616.

Far more valid and far more important is our consideration of the meaning of the power which the presence of the Holy Spirit and also that of Christ was to convey to the new apostles. John connects the presence of the Holy Spirit with the authority to forgive sins; Luke in his Gospel and in the Acts indicates that that power would be closely tied up with fulfilling the commission which Christ was giving them. The Great Commission of Matthew implies the same thing.⁴ Briefly, then, we might call this power a combination of God-given and God-preserved ability and zeal to do the work of the Kingdom.

But in His earlier commissions to the apostles, particularly that given to the twelve during the ministry in Galilee, Christ is more specific in describing the power which they will receive. The record of Matthew 10 is the most complete description of the early commission.

Christ gave them the power to cast out devils and to heal all manners of diseases and all kinds of sickness. (Matt. 10, 1) He gave them the ability to answer in the face of persecution. (Matt. 10, 18-19) But this ability was to come from the Spirit. (Matt. 10, 20) These were all powers which Christ and the Spirit supplied for the disciples. We might go into long exegetical detail in describing these powers; but they lie outside of the

4. The gift of the Spirit will fill the disciples with power adequate to perform their task in Jerusalem and in the nations.
Lenski, op. cit., vol. II, p. 749.

realm of this paper. These examples of powers, however, and they are no more than examples, show us that this "power" of the Spirit and the presence of Christ could endow the disciples with the ability for the tasks at hand. Pentecost was the first great and evident public proof that these powers were really in the possession of the apostles. Centuries of mission expansion have further proved this. But we do not need proof; the promise of Christ stands sure. He promises to equip His apostles with power sufficient for their tasks; the nature of these powers might vary, but their sufficiency will not vary.

No doubt, it is significant that Jesus does not explain the nature of the powers that the disciples would receive. He discussed that with them during His early commissions but now it is sufficient that they should know that they would receive the power that they needed for the tasks before them. His presence and the Holy Spirit will provide that.

CONCLUSIONS

As seen before, the historical analysis brought us face to face with the fact that a great deal of faulty and muddy thinking is prevalent on this subject of the mission command. The principles laid down by Christ have largely been ignored and supplanted by human principles. This demands a reevaluation of our own stand on this subject. We stand in danger of being imbued with the same false spirit so prevalent among other church bodies.

In regard to the basis and authority for the mission command, Jesus made it clear that His deity is the foundation of it. We are missionaries of His Gospel because He, the Son of God and Savior of men, has sent us. That is the foundation of our commission. The need among men is great; the Savior Himself mentioned that several times. Our compassion should be aroused for the millions dying yearly in the darkness of sin. But that is not the basis for the mission command. It is significant that the Lord in His final commands did not once mention the need of men; certainly He did not deny it by not mentioning it. But it is significant because He wished His missionaries to base their commission on His command, and not on the need of

men. He wished to give His missionaries a divine decree and directive on which to base their work rather than a human emotion, noble and strong though that may be.

Some men have maintained that only the original Twelve were meant in these commissions, or that only men of the clergy are meant in our day. But the mission commands were directed to more than the Twelve; that is sure. It is also highly probable that the Great Commission was directed to more than five hundred of Christ's disciples, representing a large number of His common followers. From these facts, we can conclude that our Savior directed His command to all Christians. The commission laid a duty upon every layman as well as upon members of the clergy. Every Christian has part of the responsibility of evangelizing the nations placed upon his shoulders.

The Savior also made it very clear that there were to be no exceptions in the people to whom the Gospel was to come. All the world was to be our field. In those final instructions the Savior did give priority to the Jewish nation, but apparently for the same reason that we give priority to our own nation. It was practical to start in Jerusalem and spread out from there. But this did not constitute any greater right to the Gospel for the Jews or for any other nation. His commission left no room for exclusive nationalism in the program of evangelization. The world is the field.

The news of salvation, the Gospel, was the only message which the Savior gave His disciples to bring to other men. He did not mention charity or any other works of any degree of nobility and worth. The Gospel was the message to carry. Certainly, He did not discourage related Christian acts, but He made the Gospel central to such an extent that we must conclude that any other acts must be subordinate to evangelization. Any of these acts which do not contribute to the spread of the Gospel are wasted effort. With that centrality of the Gospel in the mission command, Jesus swept away all the strictly philanthropic missions of the present age as efforts which miss the point completely. The means He settled, too; they are the Word and Sacraments. No comparison of religions, syncretism, culture courses, general education could be a substitute for the life-giving Gospel. That was the way Jesus mapped out; that is the way we are to follow.

For power and assurance, Christ turned the disciples to Himself. Men have often tried to get their encouragement from the tangible results of their work. They found that the results were seldom tangible. Scripture makes it plain that we will not work in vain, but it does not promise that we will see our work bring forth fruits as we work. The Savior did not even mention tangible results in His commissions; the source of power was to be His presence and the presence of the Holy Spirit. The implication of this is especially important for the man who wishes to

do difficult mission work. He must continually assure himself of the adequate presence of the Savior; he can do that by the means of grace, the same means with which he brings others to the Savior. Other assurances may give him joy; indications of success may help him weather the storms a bit. But the only real assurance he can gain is the strong and ever-present hand of the Lord Himself. With that hand working with him, he will do the work as the Lord directed him in His Mission Commands.

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