**THE EXPOSITION OF HOLY SCRIPTURE BY ALEXANDER MACLAREN**

**MARK-079**. **THE WORLD-WIDE COMMISSION by ALEXANDER MACLAREN**

*"Every creature."*

*Mark 16:15*

The missionary enterprise has been put on many bases. People do not like commandments, but yet it is a great relief and strength to come back to one, and answer all questions with He bids me!

Now, these words of our Lord open up the whole subject of the Universality of Christianity.

**I. The divine audacity of Christianity.**

Take the scene. A mere handful of men, whether the twelveor the five hundred brethrenis immaterial.

How they must have recoiled when they heard the sweeping command, Go ye into all the world! It is like the apparent absurdity of Christ's quiet word: They need not depart; give ye them to eat, when the only visible stock of food was five loaves and two small fishes. As on that occasion, so in this final commandment they had to take Christ's presence into account. I am with you.

So note the obviously world-wide extent of Christ's claim of dominion. He had come into the world, to begin with, that the world through Him might be saved. If any man thirst, let him come. The parables of the kingdom of heaven are planned on the same grand scale. I will draw all men unto Me. It cannot be disputed that Jesus lived and moved and had His beingin this vision of universal dominion.

Here emerges the great contrast of Christianity with Judaism. Judaism was intolerant, as all merely monotheistic faiths must be, and sure of future universality, but it was not proselytising--not a missionary faith. Nor is it so to-day. It is exclusive and unprogressive still.

Mohammedanism in its fiery youth, because monotheistic was aggressive, but it enforced outward profession only, and left the inner life untouched. So it did not scruple to persecute as well as to proselytise. Christianity is alone in calmly setting forth a universal dominion, and in seeking it by the Word alone. Put up thy sword into its sheath.

**II. The foundations of this bold claim.**

Christ's sole and singular relation to the whole race. There are profound truths embodied in this relation.

**(a)** There is implied the adequacy of Christ for all. He is for all, because He is the only and all-sufficient Saviour. By His death He offered satisfaction for the sins of the whole world. Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth, for I am God, and there is none else. Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is none other name, etc.

**(b)** The divine purpose of mercy for all. God will have all men to be saved, and to come to a knowledge of the truth.

**(c)** The adaptation of the Gospel message to all. It deals with all men as on one level. It addresses universal humanity. Unto you, O men, I call, and My voice is to the sons of men. It speaks the same language to all sorts of men, to all stages of society, and in all ages. Christianity has no esoteric doctrine, no inner circle of the initiated. Consequently it introduces a new notion of privileged classes.

Note the history of Christianity in its relation to slavery, and to inferior and down-trodden races. Christianity has no belief in the existence of irreclaimable outcasts, but proclaims and glories in the possibility of winning any and all to the love which makes godlike. There is one Saviour, and so there is only one Gospel for all the world.

**III. Its vindication in facts.**

The history of the diffusion of the Gospel at first is significant. Think of the varieties of civilisation it approached and absorbed. See how it overcame the bonds of climate and language, etc. How unlike the Europe of to-day is to the Europe of Paul's time!

In this twentieth century Christianity does not present the marks of an expiring superstition.

Note, further, that the history of missions vindicates the world-wide claim of the Gospel. Think of the wonderful number of converts in the first fifty years of gospel preaching. The Roman empire was Christianised in three centuries! Recall the innumerable testimonies down to date; e.g. the absolute abandonment of idols in the South Sea Islands, the weakening of caste in India, the romance of missions in Central Africa, etc. etc.

The character, too, of modern converts is as good as was that of Paul's. The gospel in this century produces everywhere fruits like those which it brought forth in Asia and Europe in the first century. The success has been in every field. None has been abandoned as hopeless. The Moravians in Greenland. The Hottentots. The Patagonians (Darwin's testimony). Christianity has constantly appealed to all classes of society. Not many noble, but some in every age and land.

**IV. The practical duty.**

Go ye and preach. The matter is literally left in our hands. Jesus has returned to the throne. Ere departing He announces the distinct command. There it is, and it is age-long in its application,-- Preach!that is the one gospel weapon. Tell of the name and the work of God manifest in the flesh. First evangelise, then disciple the nations. Bring to Christ, then build up in Christ. There are no other orders. Let there be boundless trust in the divine gospel, and it will vindicate itself in every mission-field. Let us think imperially of Christ and the Church. Our anticipations of success should be world-wide in their sweep.

As when they kindle the festival lamps round the dome of St. Peter's, there is a first twinkling spot here and another there, and gradually they multiply till they outline the whole in an unbroken ring of light, so one by onemen will enter the kingdom, till at last every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess that Jesus is Lord.

He shall reign from shore to shore.

With illimitable sway.