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THE COMMISSION TO EVANGELIZE

“Go ye therefore . . .” (Matthew 28:19).

“ . . . and they went everywhere” (Acts 8:4).

The story of Christianity, its impact upon the world and the reverberating accents of its triumphant tread through the centuries revolves around this divine directive and the execution of this command.

The first part of the text comes from the farewell solicitations of Christ to His disciples; the last occurs simultaneous with the fourth persecution of the early church following the Day of Pentecost.

Concurrent with the enduement of pentecostal power, Christ designed a pattern of procedure for the expansion of His kingdom. “Ye shall receive power,” He said, “after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.”

The conquest was to be individual and universal; to the individual next door and to the millions in the uttermost part of the earth. They were to follow a distinct pattern and abide by a statement of principles.

The pattern was to begin at Jerusalem and keep spreading, teaching, preaching, witnessing, advancing, expounding, traveling, until *every* man had heard.

The principles form a triangle of human ex-

perience: they are *dedication, eradication, and indoctrination.*

Those curt, compassionate, comprehensive imperatives were established as the divine orders of the dispensation and are to remain in force until Jesus returns in power and glory at His second advent.

The flames of Pentecost that diffused the Upper Room prayer meeting shook Jerusalem from center to circumference. Thousands of converts began to witness to the fact of a risen, glorified Christ.

The evangelization of the world began as Christ had anticipated and dictated; but the disciples were slow to enter the second and successive stages of His commission.

The urgency of the hour, the brevity of life, the importance of the message, the cry of a lost world, the call to conquest made it a sin for the disciples to fortify themselves within the ramparts of Jerusalem. They must go or die; they must expand or perish; they must expand or retrogress.

Thus the scourge of persecution swept the city of prophets, priests and kings.

The healing of the lame man sparked the first persecution and the imprisonment of Peter and John. They defied the authorities, and were again arrested with many others, and put in the common prison. An angel opened the prison door and sent them out to preach again.

The deacons began to preach, opening the flood gates of more painful persecution. Steven was stoned to death.

Organized persecution was instituted under the management of Saul of Tarsus. Through this development, God was able to get His will accomplished. Luke summarized the results with this

piteful, pungent phrase: "They went everywhere." Behind them was a new made grave on a lonely hill in Zion, and the stains of Stephen's blood on the cobblestone street of Jerusalem; but before them lay a lost world crying for the message of salvation.

In their conscience burned the memory of the glory that they had seen on the dying face of the first Christian martyr. In their souls was an unconquerable compassion for conquest that could only be quelled by the fires of martyrdom and death.

Under the magnetic leadership of Saul of Tarsus, the excelsus of a proud Jewish hierarchy, the persecution took a more dynamic and specific pattern. But instead of it frightening the disciples into quiet submission, it served to flush them from their stronghold in Jerusalem, and as they went, they preached. "They went everywhere preaching the word."

Two significant events at this juncture cleared the right-of-way for the mainstream of human events for the next two thousand years.

The first was the conversion of Saul of Tarsus on the Damascus Road and the second was the midnight rendezvous on the top of a city wall when some unnamed disciples put Saul into a basket and let him down on the outside of that Damascus wall and turned him loose into the world.

The church is still talking about that noontime conversion of Saul of Tarsus, transforming him from a persecutor of the church into an exponent of its matchless message.

I have heard people ask the question, "Why doesn't God strike men down in this day with a blinding salvo of heaven's artillery like He did Paul?" Perhaps God doesn't waste cannon shots on snow birds!

Saul, from his hour of conversion, became the universal symbol and example of propagating the principles and patterns of Christianity as taught and commanded by Jesus Christ.

Strange as it may seem when viewed in the proper perspective of their application, the principles and patterns become one. Take them in order: *dedication, eradication, indoctrination.*

Jesus said, "Do this and you will convert the world." This timeless pattern was born in the heart of God. It is the one way, the only way, the sure way to save a lost world. It belongs to the church. It is the rule of our conquest. By this, and this alone we will conquer.

Lenin, the father of Communism, held to a dream of world conquest. He is reputed to have said: "If we will take the principles instituted by Jesus Christ and use them, we can capture the world with Communism.

Let us analyze these simple steps:

Dedication—This is the basic experience of Christianity. It means commitment to a cause, to enter into the spirit and character of that cause. "If any man would save his life, he must lose it," said Jesus.

Eradication—This is the cleansing of the heart through sanctification; the washing away of the root of bitterness; the taking out of the mind and heart of all preconceived ideas and opinions.

Indoctrination—This is the infilling of the heart with the Holy Ghost whose task is to teach all things and bring all things to remembrance whatsoever Christ said and taught.

This is Communism's method of attack. They recruit dedicated men, men who lose their lives in spreading the doctrines of the Communist Party.

Then begins the experience of eradication. Before the Communist tries to make a convert, they brainwash their prospects. They take out or obliterate all that they have ever believed in and have been taught. The mind is then ready to be filled with the poisonous doctrine of Communism.

They have stolen Christianity's methods and have done more in 60 years to capture the world than Christianity has done in 2,000 years. The ancient tyrants and rulers of by-gone years were content to own only a man's body. They made slaves of men; they used their bodies for toil.

Communism is not content to have only men's bodies. They want their minds to help propagate their cause. They learned this from the teachings of Jesus. Christ doesn't only want our bodies, He wants our minds, and our hearts, and our souls.

Modern methods of Evangelism are so streamlined and programed until we are going in forty directions at once, and when we have exerted every fantastic gimmick in the book, we find that our converts don't last thirty days or don't learn enough about dedication to win one lost soul to Christ.

There is no easy way to evangelize the world. No man has ever devised an "open sesame" to save a lost soul.

If the church is to ever snatch the initiative from the tenacious clutches of pagan Communism and fire her tired blood with a progressive passion of Pentecostal Power, she must dig from the ruins of her ancient glory these time-tested principles of DEDICATION, ERADICATION and INDOCTRINATION and throw them into the teeth of a pagan world in the spirit of those apostles who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions,

quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed violent in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens.

These men were stoned, sawn asunder, tempted, slain with the sword, were destitute, afflicted, tortured; yet these heroic men and noble women shook the mighty Roman Empire to pieces and they challenge us today as no other generation that ever lived.

How they witnessed! They told their story in sermon, related it in synagogues, testified to it in homes, talked about it around camp fires, discussed it on shipboard, greeted their arrestors with testimony, and related their experiences as evidence. They made the story their defense, went to jail rather than squelch it, sang it at midnight, converted jailers with it, prayed for their murderers because of it, bowed their dying heads in the power of it, and turned persecutors into preachers by the very triumph of their home-going.

There are about three billion people in the world today. Over half of them have never heard the Gospel story. Sixty-four million Americans have no church affiliations. Thirty-seven million children never darken the door of a church or a Sunday School. The nation's crime rate continues to rise at an alarming pace. One-half of the world's population is under the influence of godless Communism.

There is only one power on earth that can save the world; that is the power committed to the church by her founder, Jesus Christ.

The church is not an ark where a favored few may float over a placid sea of life to the golden shore. She is not an insurance agency to which

one may pay his premium and be insured against hell fire.

The church is not a social club where members assemble occasionally to enjoy each other's fellowship and entertain one another. She is not a convalescent home where the spiritually crippled and the morally anemic are treated for their heredity ills.

The church is a band of blood-bathed, baptized, battle-scarred warriors sent from God to preach a message of salvation to a dying world. She is a lighthouse in humanity's blackest hour and in time's darkest night. She comes forth like the sun in all of its glory, "as terrible as an army with banners and like a strong man to run a race."

Napoleon said, "Conquest made me what I am and conquest must sustain me."

The conquest of saving lost souls brought the church into her original glory. By the same token, the conquest for lost souls will sustain the church until the sign of the Cross is the insignia of every land.

Saul of Tarsus met Christ at high noon on a highway to Damascus. From that day, through a dogged conquest of dedication, eradication and indoctrination, he had burned a path through most of the known world and at the end of thirty years, he was standing on the doorsteps of Caesar's palace preaching Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

Evangelism is Christianity's battle cry. It is her most fascinating word. It remains her most challenging term. Methods may change, but principles never. Strategy may be altered, but the original pattern of conquest cannot be improved upon.

With it we conquer; without it we perish. With it we are victors; without it we are vanquished.

With it we are masters; without it we are slaves.
With it we overcome; without it we are overrun.
With it we are triumphant; without it we are
doomed.

*Give us a watchword for the hour,
A thrilling word, a word of power,
A battlecry, a flaming breath
That calls to conquest or to death.*

*A word to rouse the Church from rest,
To heed the Master's high behest,
The call is given: Ye hosts arise,
Our watchword is, Evangelize!*

*The glad evangel now proclaim,
Through all the earth, in Jesus' name;
This word is ringing through the skies:
Evangelize! Evangelize!*

*To dying men, a fallen race,
Make known the gift of Gospel grace;
The world that now in darkness lies,
Evangelize! Evangelize!*

—Author Unknown