The Watchword.

presents a mingled condition, a half-and-half life. That is the opinion of the world. Now, his family, surely his family will be affected by it. The time comes for the angel to destroy the city, and he says, "Hast thou any here except the family?" The man says, "I have tried as an honest father to do a little honest business, and to mix up with the world, but at least my family respect me." Do they? He came to his sons-in-law, and said, "Go you out of this place, for the Lord will destroy this city;" but he seemed as one that mocked unto his sons-in-law. They said in his face, "You fool, you have lived for the world, and talked about it, and you come to us and say the flames of God are coming upon us; we don't believe such folly as that." My brothers, they will never believe you when you have lived a compromised life. It is the compromised life which is ruining the Church and the world. The compromised life is an everlasting disgrace to the Christian, and it is ruining the Church of nineteenth century, as it was in the days of Lot and Abraham.

He goes home, and now he is shut in with his wife and two daughters, and he says, "My dears, the time has come to escape; the Lord is coming to destroy the city; I have laid up wealth; I have worked hard to get you a competency; I have gone through a great deal that was perilous; I have risked my soul; I have lived a half-and-half life, but it was for your sakes." Oh, my brethren, it is your doubting compromises that are destroying your whole soul's peace, and your family life.

Now, they must escape. And now what is going to become of the accumulated wealth? He nearly lost his soul in order that he might get rich, and endow Mrs. Lot and the Misses Lot with something after he was gone. Every shred of it has to be left behind, and he must, escape for his life. And now the angels take hold of him, and have to drag him out. Would to God that we might be the angels, and drag you out this morning from Sodom if you are living a mixed-up life. When they get them outside, they say, "Escape for your life to the mountains, and tarry not." Lot says, "Oh, see that little city, Zoar; mayn't I just keep that bit of possession in the plain life?" Mayn't I keep one little thing? It is only my little carpet dance.

Brethren, God wants whole-hearted deliverance, straightout, and all in a moment, from the things that have been bringing a curse upon your family.

THREE MISSIONARY AMBITIONS.

BY A. J. GORDON, D.D.

We are often greatly indebted to one who asks us a question. A student inquired of us one day whether the Bible anywhere sanctions ambition. Yes; for though the word is not found in the English concordance, it occurs in the original. The word philotimoimenon, to love honor, is found three times in the Greek Testament, and the three text where it occurs constitute an admirable chain of missionary exhortation.

I. The Field: "Yea, so have I been ambitious to preach the Gospel not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation" (Rom. 15: 20).

This is not according to the course of this world. If one were buying a house-lot it would be no objection, other conditions being favorable, that he could secure a plot where the foundation-stones had been already laid, leaving nothing to be done but to rear the superstructure, stone upon stone, till the building should be complete. "No!" says the apostle, "I desire a field where not a sod has been turned, where not a turf has been broken, lest I should build upon another man's foundation." If this saying sounds paradoxical, we believe that on reflection the whole philosophy of missions will be found wrapped up in it. The great commission reads, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature," not,
"Stay in one part of the world and build up a Christian civilization." As distinctly as concentration was the principle of Judaism, so clearly is diffusion the principle of Christianity. The requirement of the one was that all should come to Jerusalem; the command of the other is that Jerusalem shall go to all men. And this latter idea is so vital to the Gospel that it cannot be violated without the most fatal results. There is a wise saying that "capital is the blood of business," and the body politic can only be healthy.

As it is kept in circulation.

But who, looking at the condition of the world today, can doubt that Christianity is suffering from congestion at the centres—too much blood around the educational centres of Christendom, producing that intellectual vertigo by which so many theological professors are made to stumble upon the skandalon of sceptical criticism; and too much blood about the religious centres, the home churches, causing that fatty degeneration of the heart by which Christians are becoming inclined to a good-natured and easy-going toleration of all religions—pagan, heathen, and infidel.

"In union is strength," the world's maxim; "in diffusion is strength" is the motto of Christianity. "Tear down the rookeries if you would be rid of the rooks," was John Knox's advice for dealing with the religious houses where the monks and friars of his day were congregated, to fatten on the life of the nation. What intelligent Christian can question the vast benefit which would accrue to the world if there could be a removal of those theological "foundations" on which such learned professors as Wellhausen and Kuenen and Pfeiderer and their American sympathizers have rested, while they have undermined the authority of that Bible which they are employed to teach? and if the endowment of their chairs could be capitalized for sending hundreds of plain, pious, and consecrated missionaries to the heathen, even though those missionaries were utterly ignorant of Hebrew or Greek or systematic theology? Cromwell put the same hard sense into another saying when, inquiring about certain silver shrines in the cathedrals, he was told that they were effigies of the twelve apostles. "Melt them up and coin them into shillings, and send them about doing good!" he exclaimed.

So we say with the utmost emphasis concerning the architectural luxuries and the artistic choirs and the sumptuous adornments of our modern sanctuaries. What an unspeakable blessing might come to the world if the evangelical wealth thus employed could be coined into missionaries and sent to those who have never heard the Gospel! The apostles saying embodied the deepest wisdom, and its truth was never more apparent than now. We believe that the great commission contains the best antidote against the great relapse which threatens the Church today; the apostolic missions, undertaken with new zeal, furnish the only line of resistance against the apostate theology and the apostate Christianity which are now coming in upon us like a flood.

Diffusion or death is the alternative which faces us. The church which is not a missionary church must now become a missing church. The foundations which our fathers laid in faith and prayer are in many instances being built upon with hay, wood, and stubble; the true-hearted must turn aside from them and build anew upon the foundations of apostles and prophets.

In a word, it seems to us that in the apostle's method lies the true secret, not only of the salvation of the world, but of the safety of the Church. The mission workers in our city, who, without pay or patronage, plunge down into the slums to rescue the perishing, are rarely found to be unsound teachers of the Gospel. In mingling with them we have constantly been surprised...
and delighted at the Evangelical correctness of their teaching. On the other hand, there are scores of preachers in the same city who are building on ecclesiastical foundations many generations deep—creed foundations, wealth foundations, and culture foundations—of whom it may be said without slander that the preaching of the simple Evangelical Gospel is the last thing they know how to do. We see the saying of Dr. Duff demonstrated on every hand: "The church which ceases to be evangelistic will soon cease to be Evangelical."

11. The Work.—Paul exhorts the Thessalonian Christians that they “be ambitious to be quiet, and to do their own business,” etc. (i Thess. iv. 11). The nature of that business is not defined, but the word points to the Christian’s special and peculiar work. "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father’s business?" asked Jesus when his mother was chiding him for neglect of parental claims. And since the great commission was given, every disciple may answer the claims of business, and the claims of society, and even the claims of the home church with the question: "Wist ye not that I must be about my Master’s business?" There is, there can be, now no work comparable for a moment with that of making known the Gospel to the unsaved millions for whom Christ died. And is there any sphere where a sanctified ambition is more strongly demanded than here? The lament of an eminent laborer on the foreign field, that in spite of all which the Christian Church has attempted and accomplished in this century, "it has thus far only been playing at missions," is a statement borne out by actual facts; for do not men who "mean business" put themselves and their energy and their capital and their time into their special work? Has the Church of the nineteenth century, with all its efforts toward world-wide evangelization, done this? "Let us not be pessimists, but let us be truthists," says, and well says, a Scotch preacher. We do not expect perfection in the Christian Church, but it is better that we aim at perfection and come short of it than to aim at imperfection and attain it.

We are in danger of self-complacency in view of what we have done, if we do not impartially judge ourselves for what we have failed to do.

Let us examine ourselves, then, concerning our outlay for the great work in comparison with our inlay for ourselves.

According to the best estimate which we can obtain, there are now above nine thousand missionaries on the foreign field—a noble army of witnesses for which we should devoutly praise God. But it is computed that there are a hundred and thirty thousand ordained ministers at home representing the same constituency. How vast the disproportion! Fifteen times as many building on foundations already laid as there are preaching the Gospel where Christ is not named. Does this represent the most aggressive business policy in the enterprise of missions?

At the lowest estimate fourteen million dollars were given by Protestant Christendom last year for the cause of foreign missions. We praise God for this testimony of Christian heart to the constraining power of Jesus’ love, and for all of sacrifice and self-denial which it represents. And yet, though the Christians of America gave nearly one half of this sum, they gave it according to the reckoning of Dr. Strong, based on the census of 1890, out of wealth amounting to thirteen billions of dollars now in the hands of the Christians of the United States; so that by the law of proportional giving they contributed on that year, he says, one thirty-second part of one per cent. of their means to foreign missions. A widow’s mite, indeed, but a mite subtracted from millions left untouched—a speck of gold-dust dropped from a mountain of gold coins! Does this look like an aggressive policy on the part of those who
are doing business for God? Again, it is held by many Christians that the task which the Church has assigned to her is that of converting the whole world to Christ. If success is any criterion of business enterprise, let us ask what has been actually done? Hardly more than two million disciples can be reckoned as the result of the toil and effort of this century of missions; and if we add what are called “adherents” —those who have in some sense been influenced by Christianity and identified with it—we may perhaps compute two millions more. But while we rejoice and give thanks for what has thus been wrought we have to remember that in the same hundred years in which this has been accomplished the heathen and Mohammedan population of the globe has increased by two hundred millions; in other words, the false religions have outstripped the true seventy to one in the race for the conquest of this earth to Christ. How long will it take to convert the world at this rate of speed? Is it true that the children of this world are swifter as well as wiser in their generation than the children of light? A hundred years have elapsed since Carey went to India, and still vast proportions of that empire remain unreached. The British Government took the census of India three years ago and did it in a single day —its two hundred and eighty millions of population numbered and registered within twenty-four hours; and yet in a hundred years missions have not succeeded in reaching all in that vast empire, and Standard Oil cans are found today adorning the native houses in India, where as yet no Christians are found. Nay, more; we have to be rebuked not only by comparing ourselves with the children of this world, but with the children of the Evil One. Did we spend less than a million for promoting the worship of our Christ in China last year? One of the oldest missionaries in that empire estimates that the worshippers of demons spent a hundred and thirty millions in sacrifices to their god, the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience. What shall we say to these things? We must ponder them seriously, and ask thoughtfully whether there is not room for a vastly larger business ambition in carrying on the work of missions? And if, perchance, we see those who really rise to the height of this great argument, let us not count them fools and fanatics.

III. Our Reward. — “Wherefore we are ambitious, that, whether present or absent, we may be well pleasing unto Him” (2 Cor. v. 9, vide R. V.). This certainly is the highest evangelical motive. Neither apostolic succession nor apostolic success constitutes the truest credential of the missionary. “No soldier on service entangles himself in the affairs of this life” (2 Tim. ii. 4. R. V.). No; not even if, by so doing he could enhance his success and multiply his conquests. “That he may please him who enrolled him as a soldier” is the chief aim. The joy of the harvest is blessed; but one must not fix the eye upon this, so as to forget the approval of the Husbandman, which is greater than all.

The first great missionary could say as his highest confession: “I do always the things that please Him” (John 8: 29.).

The chief missionary of the apostles writes: “Or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ” (Gal. 1: 10). “I have one passion, it is he, he alone,” wrote Zinzendorf. “Here I am, Lord, send me,” said David Brainerd. “Send me to the rough and savage pagans of the wilderness; send me from all that is called comfort on earth; send me even to death itself, if it be but in thy service and to promote thy Kingdom.” The final award will not be “Well done, good and successful servant” —though blessed are they who shall be counted worthy to achieve success—but “Well done, good and faithful servant.”