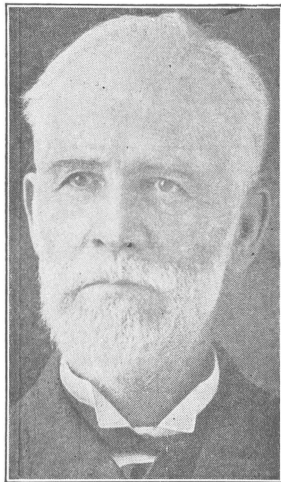


LOPSIDEDNESS IN MISSIONS



J. B. GAMBRELL, D. D.

BAPTIST HOME MISSION BOARD
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A VOICE FROM THE DEAD

"He being dead yet speaketh."

—Heb. 11:4.

The righteousness of Abel's sacrifice has made his gift vocal through the centuries, and Dr. J. B. Gambrell, our lamented leader, though dead, speaks as if alive to us through this sane, Scriptural and vigorous treatment of a balanced program of Missions. It was never more needed than it is just now.

B. D. GRAY,

Corresponding Secretary.

Home Mission Rooms,
804 Wynne-Claughton Building,
Atlanta, Georgia.
November, 1925.

LOPSIDEDNESS IN MISSIONS

J. B. GAMBRELL, D. D. in *Baptist Standard*

There is not another enterprise under heaven known among men so well calculated to stir the human heart as missions. Every real missionary movement sets two currents to running in opposite directions. One flows outward and the other inward. One is the spirit of altruism, and the other selfishness.

The mission enterprise awakens the noblest enthusiasm, but it is often beset by many human imitations. Once it is allowed that we may be in any way influenced by mere human considerations or feelings, we are involved in endless questions of preference. Missions stand in the authority of Jesus Christ. They are a doctrine, not an expediency. For instructions concerning missions, we must go to the law book of the kingdom, the New Testament. From this source we may most surely learn what we need to know, as to this liveliest of questions. There are some things we may gather with unerring certainty from the living oracles, and these certain things must be our guides amid the complexus of conflicting opinions which divide people into small groups of missionary advocates.

I leave out of consideration in this article the anti-missionary and the omis-

sionary, both obnoxious to the plain teaching of God's Word. I shall discuss lopsidedness in missions, and there is plenty of it to discuss. Before entering on the discussion, I desire to make a few preparatory remarks.

Missions must always be considered from the standpoint of the whole world's conquest to the obedience of faith. The far-reaching meaning of the conversion of any soul is the conversion of other souls, reaching on to the consummation of all things. Every convert belongs to the army of conquest, which is never to stack colors till the reign of Christ is completed in the earth, till the annunciation hymn of the angels shall be a reality. Any view of missions which detaches one part from another is insufficient; any conception which gives to one part a supremacy is worse than insufficient, it is bad. Any plan which limits the efforts and prayers of God's people to a man or a single section is hurtful. The Christ view—"all the world," "every creature,"—is the only true view. No Christian, no matter how little or poor or weak or ignorant, can stand for less than all that Christ stands for—all of it, to the outer limits.

But there be many who are for associational missions and no more. These say such is our work, and so it is; but not one particle more their work than

is the work in China. To a very great extent our present crippled condition, as a people, comes of lopsidedness in the training of the young churches. The churches concentrated on associational missions till the territory was dotted over with churches. Then, having made no connections leading outward, they ceased their efforts, remained undeveloped and many have perished as the result of lopsidedness in missions. If we are at all wise, this monumental blunder will be carefully guarded against in the future. Every little mission church of today, from its infancy, should be trained for world-wide missions. If the conversion of one soul means the conversion of other souls in an endless chain of influence, grace and salvation, so the establishment of a church today means other churches, until over the whole wide world, churches shall grace every landscape and welcome earth's children to the fold of the good Shepherd for rest and safety.

Some go as far as State missions and stop. "Is there not as much as we can do in our State?" Maybe there is vastly more than we can do; but, if our eyes are not holden, we will see that we can do the work near far better, if, in our spirit and purpose, prayers and efforts, we go full length with Him who loved the whole world. The outflow of the

mission spirit to China, to darkest Africa, will make the current run swifter nearer home, provided it be in deed and in truth a genuine mission spirit.

We need a proper standpoint from which to look at the whole question. That standpoint is the Cross, where Christ died for the world. From Calvary all nations, tribes, kindred and tongues are equidistant. A world lost in Adam is to be saved in Jesus, through the preaching of the Cross. The races of men were made of one blood, and are to be redeemed by the one blood. Territorial divisions do not count in Christ's purposes of grace.

But this round, full New Testament view of missions is sorely marred by lopsidedness in the thither view of things. Foreign missions have to some an attraction, not unmixed with the heroic. There is a charming heroism in people's going far hence on the sublime mission of winning the heathen. Besides this there are various and very specious arguments advanced to show Scriptural and vigorous treatment of eminence in all our plans for world-wide missions, all of which is very shortsighted and lopsided, having neither Scripture nor common sense to support it. Dr. Edward Judson, a son of the Apostle to Burmah, in a missionary address in the interest of foreign mis-

sions, said with great fire, good sense and point:

“We must be sure, however, that our foreign missionary spirit is genuine and not a mere fad. The sure test is whether we are interested in everything lying between the heathen and ourselves. To many of us distance seems to ‘lend enchantment to the view.’ We burn with enthusiasm over the miseries of people far away, but are limp and nerveless as regards suffering close by. We find ourselves greatly interested in foreigners when they reside in their own land, so much so in fact, that we send our best men as missionaries to them and pay their traveling expenses; but when the Lord puts it into the heart of these same foreigners to come to our shores, paying their own traveling expenses, instead of rejoicing over their advent, we are sometimes inclined to turn away from them in despair. They do not look so picturesque near by. This is only the semblance of the true missionary spirit—a counterfeit, not the real coin.”

There is considerable lopsidedness of this sort among us. It lacks the tone and substance of genuine New Testament missions.

Sometime workers in one department of missions, home, foreign or State, become so immersed in that particular part of the work that they can see

nothing else. The common sense of the masses of God's people must save us from lopsidedness in one direction or another. Sometime ago, a brother seriously proposed that all foreign mission money be collected without charge, or that the expense be put on other departments of the common work of Christ. This is sheer lopsidedness. Another would induce everybody to give nearly all to foreign missions and only a pittance to home missions. Still another will give largely to State missions and hardly at all to home or foreign. All of it is hurtful, even to the favored mission. No severer blow could be struck at foreign missions, for instance, than for an effort to be made to leave home missions out or nearly so. Where are the funds to come from to support foreign missions? From the home field of course. Suppose we lose our home field, how will that affect foreign missions in the future? No prophet is needed to tell.

Turn it round. Suppose we concentrate on missions at home. What then? We will have denominational stagnation, and, in the end, death in our home churches. The New Testament is luminous along the whole line of operation. Churches were planted and nurtured through courses of training, not only for themselves and the regions near by, but as sources of supply for operations

further out. The two went together, lengthening the cords and strengthening the stakes. Woe be to those who despise this order.

Undoubtedly the general policy of the Convention is the wise one. It only needs to be made effective in the all-round development of our churches to stand four-square to all the demands of the gospel to the end of the world. If we will unitedly follow the true conception of a rounded development, Texas Baptists, in this generation, will stand for more than all the South does now for the evangelism of the whole world. Lopsidedness, whether in one direction or another, will hurt the one great mission enterprise in which are wrapped up the hopes of humanity.