

The Biggest Failure of the Church

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(1843-1921)



I believe that the failure of the Church is to see that it is a separated, a called-out Body in the purposes of God, charged with a definite mission limited in its purpose and scope. The endeavor to take from Israel her promises of earthly glory and appropriate them over into this dispensation has done more to swerve the Church from the appointed course than all other influences put together.

The Church has failed to follow its appointed pathway of heavenliness; it has turned aside from that purpose to the work of civilizing the world, building magnificent temples, and acquiring earthly power and wealth.

Such notions are founded on Israelitish Old Testament promises. These promises, which were given to Israel alone, are quoted as justifying what we see all about us today.

Did you ever put side-by-side the promises given to the Church, and to Israel, and see how absolutely in contrast they are? It is impossible to mingle them.

The Jew was promised an earthly inheritance, earthly wealth, earthly honor and earthly power. The Church is promised no such thing, but is pointed always to heaven as the place where it is to receive its rest and reward.

The promise to the Church is a promise of persecution, if faithful in this world; but a promise of a

great inheritance and reward hereafter. In the meantime, it is to be a pilgrim body, passing through this scene, but abiding above.

For three centuries the Church was in awful persecution. Then came a great change: the Emperor Constantine professed conversion, and Christianity became the court religion. Then the tables were turned and the Church began to persecute! With that came the Dark Ages.

Then, in the fifteenth century, came the Reformation out of which have come Protestant movements of various kinds. The Bible was put into the hands of the people, and has been translated into many tongues. With an open Bible came light and liberty again, but never union again. On the contrary, division followed division; sect followed sect.

Is the Gospel then a failure? God forbid! The Gospel never failed, and can never fail. God's Word by the Gospel is accomplishing precisely the mission which was foreseen and foretold for it, that whereunto it was sent. We must not forget, either, that *the Gospel will yet bring this world to the Savior. It is not at all a question of the ultimate triumph of the blessed Lord.*

The heathen may rage and the people imagine vain things, but the Father will yet set His King on His holy hill in Zion. Converted Israel, glorified saints, even a mighty angel shall yet proclaim the Gospel of the Kingdom, and,

The mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow into it (Isaiah 2:2).

The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea (Isaiah 11:9).

All of this will surely come to pass, for the Lord has spoken it – but not in this dispensation. This is the age of the “ecclesia” – of the called out ones.

Let me ask you, what is God doing in this age of ours? Is He not taking out of the Gentiles a people? A few Jews are being converted, for Paul tells us there is always a remnant in Israel according to the election of grace (Romans 11:5), but the great, the altogether vast majority of the Church is taken out of the Gentiles. Not the conversion of all, but everywhere, the taking out of some. Evangelization, then, and not conversion, is the mission committed to the Church. It is the divinely appointed means for the calling out of a people for His Name, the Church, the “Ecclesia.”

Further, the purpose of the Father in this age is not the establishment of Israel's Kingdom. The Old Testament prophets tell us in perfectly simple, unambiguous language how the Kingdom is to be brought in, who is to be its ruler, and the extent and character of that rule, and the result in the universal prevalence of peace and righteousness.

The irremediable disaster which the wild allegorizing of Origen and his school has inflicted upon exegesis is the bringing of the prophets over into this Church age! The intermingling of the Body of Christ's purpose with Israel's Kingdom purpose is today the heavy clog upon the feet of them who preach the glad tidings.

See how inevitably so. Israel's Kingdom applies spiritual forces to the solution of material problems. How shall man live long and wisely? Israel's Kingdom is the answer. How shall exact justice be done on earth? Israel's Kingdom provides for it. When shall wars and human butchery cease in this blood-saturated earth? When Israel's Kingdom is set up by the King Himself. When shall creation give up to man her potential secrets? In Israel's Kingdom age. When shall the earth be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea? When the King and His Kingdom are here.

Of all of these things the Old Testament prophets are full. We turn to the New Testament and find what? The birth of the King, the heralding of Israel's Kingdom as "*at hand*," the announcement in the Sermon on the Mount of the principles of this Kingdom, the utter refusal of Israel to receive her King, the passing of this Kingdom into the mixed and veiled condition set forth in the seven parables of Matthew Thirteen, its full revelation being postponed until "*the harvest*," which is fixed definitely "*at the end of this age*."

With the Kingdom being thus postponed, what is revealed as filling and occupying this age? THE CHURCH – THE BODY OF CHRIST!

Let us leave the government of the world until the King comes; let us leave the civilizing of the world to be the incidental effect of the presence of Christ, and let us give our time, our strength, our money, our days to the mission distinctively committed to the Church.

Abridged

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