

# The Glory of the Latter House

by R.H. Miller

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*The glory of the latter house is in its social and public mission, and the church must be a force for good in the world, providing a suitable place for worship, education, and service.*

**Scripture:** Psalm 127:1, Proverbs 24:3, Isaiah 58:12, Matthew 5:14, 1 Corinthians 3:9, 1 Corinthians 12:27, Ephesians 2:20, Hebrews 10:24, 1 Peter 2:5

**Topics:** "Social Justice", "Church Mission"

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## Description

R. H. Miller preaches about the importance of the social and public mission of the church, emphasizing that Christianity is intertwined with social responsibilities and forms, and that the church must be at the forefront of developing, occupying, and building moral elements in the community. He highlights the need for church extension to minister to the whole life of individuals, representing the divine pattern of doing good and fulfilling the mission of beneficence. Miller stresses the significance of building churches dedicated to unity and redemption, sharing life and treasure with the world, and meeting the urgent demand for distinctly religious architecture in modern times.

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## Transcript

The glory of the latter house is in the social and public mission of the church. The early church undertook to provide not only for the spiritual welfare, but also for the whole round life of its members.

Christianity is inseparable from social responsibilities and social forms. For the church is not only the product of God's love for man, but is also the highest expression of man's humanity for man.

If the kingdom of God is to be sought first, it must be first. First to develop, first to occupy, first to build, first to arouse, first to speak, first to rally the moral elements and forces of the community.

Monasticism was once only a glorious mistake. To-day, in any form, it is a

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vitiatng and fatal anachronism. The house of the living God, and the houses of the dead, can no longer be associated. If the church wishes to save itself from extinction, its people must pray that it be taken not out of the world.

From the latter house went forth the moral and social power which saved the Jewish people through a long career of perils, and by Israel prepared the world for the coming One. And from the latter house went forth the law and the spirit to the Christian church, consecrating it to its divine mission of beneficence, healing the sick, refining man from his coarseness and intemperance, and handing on from generation to generation the gospel of the death and resurrection of Christ.

And the glory of the latter houses we are building is in their facilities to minister to the whole life of men as the representatives of our divine pattern who "went about doing good."

The building-time has come for the Disciples of Christ.

What does the significant growth of the Disciples imply, except that we are ministers to America and the churches of America? Our mission has been revealed by the Head of the church, our place ordained by the God of history, and our duties imposed by the Lord of the vineyard.

We must build in every city and town in America a church founded upon the apostles and prophets, dedicated to the one Name and devoted to the redemption and unification of the human race.

The question is not, shall we share our life and treasure with the world, but, what kind of life shall we give and how much of the treasure shall we share?

Thus from the standpoint of the individual, society and the world. Church Extension, is unparalleled in importance.

A church is the noblest and most representative building which man can erect. Paul writes of "living stones," and any one who has ever stood before purposeful architecture understands the phrase.

The craving of all life is for embodiment and self-expression. God is a spirit. But "the heavens declare his glory, and the firmament showeth his handiwork."

Church Extension is the inevitable outcome of the commission.

The Christian Church is not a form of doctrine, a system of philosophy, or an ecclesiastical order, but the body of Christ, a new incarnation, the constantly renewed form in which his spirit lives and works. It should represent him physically and spiritually to each succeeding age.

The spiritual body can not carry divine functions without the church organization, appliances and buildings.

"At first panic, desolation and [272] poverty gave religion a chance for nothing but faith, fortitude and tears."

But at last the seed obtained its body. The spiritual church made itself a new body for Christ.

Man's supreme act is worship.

It is both an achievement and a gift. The glory of the former house was the gratitude, devotion and gifts of one God-loving, God-fearing man. The glory of the latter house was the soul-hunger, the nameless longings and voiceless aspirations of a whole people.

The distinctly religious building is as necessary to man's well-being and progress as the home is.

"To find God is the true romance of the soul"--its supreme adventure. And its Bethel, Shiloh and Jerusalem have been both the temples and the monuments of the soul's divinest experiences and truest history.

As the student may judge the ancient social life by remains of ancient social institutions, so the whole life of a modern community may be not unfairly tested by the character and accessories of its worship.

"It is ever a fatal sign of art decaying into luxury and religion into contempt, when men permit the house of God to be meaner than their own."

In a day of specialization in all departments, the need for distinctly religious architecture is greater than ever.

The church of the twentieth century should represent as truthfully and speak as eloquently the current religious thought and activity as did the medieval cathedral. The very stones themselves should cry out as they do in those glorious old facades "thronged with open and shouting mouths."

Noble architecture is the earth-born son of heavenly faith and has moved through the centuries "in trailing clouds of glory."

A voiceless and invisible church is without effect, but who can estimate the total influence of such buildings as Old Trinity in New York or Old South in Boston? In these the heavenward suggestion is instant and unmistakable. They cause a throb of the divine life.

A new spirit affects modern architecture. Church Extension is trying to meet the urgent demand that places of worship and religious activity, in form and arrangement, be worthy of the purposes to which they are dedicated.

"Chastity and Beauty are sisters."

There is a beauty of holiness, and He that has made everything beautiful in its time is not honored by makeshift buildings which disappoint expectation and offend good taste.

There is no virtue in deformity and discomfort, and in this day of material abundance and lavish expenditure, mean and inadequate buildings are unmistakable signs of the lethargic state of religion.

The distinctive Bible-school building has become a modern educational necessity.

Christian nurture and training must be the reliance of the future for the church and society. The age of the camp-meeting and the infant reprobate is past, and the little child is set in our midst, not to be a self-conscious prig and pious hypocrite, but to bless and teach and mold.

Wisdom unto salvation shall be the glory of the latter house, whose beautiful gate is the entrance from childhood into instructed and consecrated Christian youth.

But at least half, and the better half, of education consists in the formation of right feelings. "Out of the heart are the issues of life."

Faith should have a radiant memory as well as a radiant hope. Public worship and instruction do for the child what private devotions can not do. What conception of the beauty of holiness, the valor of faith, the

loyalty of discipleship, and the joy of Christian fellowship can a child have who associates these truths with the dreariness of an unsightly church or the bare walls and bad air of a basement Bible school. No wonder that, as soon as he is free, he seeks in "nature, the vicar of the almighty Lord."

But on Sunday morning, "where through the long-drawn aisle and fretted vault, the pealing anthem swells the note of praise," through the martial hymn, the presence of the congregation, the service of baptism and the Lord's Supper, the solemn hush, the teaching of God's word, there sweeps over the child a conception of the church as real, practical and present. And reason and [273] imagination seized at their topmost poise are crystalized into holy duty.

Church Extension is not only another branch of modern Christian enterprise, but is a debt incurred by modern Christian missions.

1. We owe Church Extension to one hundred years of Home Missions. Every "claim" staked by the Christian missionary should be made, a Christian homestead by Church Extension. Hundreds of abandoned missions, thousands of dollars squandered, unnumbered disheartened and defeated missionaries, proclaim the need of adequate buildings.

Whenever there has been intelligent and adequate co-operation between the two societies in the home land, the glory of the congregation suitably housed has exceeded the glory of the meeting in hall or tent. The seed has been multiplied in the fruit.

2. We owe Church Extension to our missionaries upon the frontiers. Brave men should not be betrayed into needless sacrifice for a temporary or hopeless cause.

We owe it to as brave an army of volunteers as ever were mustered under any flag, to adopt a policy of support which shall guarantee to every man who enters the service that his life and labor shall not be in vain.

3. We owe Church Extension to the growing towns and cities of America. The great cities are only one-half to one-fourth as well supplied with church buildings as the country, and a canvass of the city churches reveals that they are wholly inadequate to minister to the total needs of the people. What our fathers did in the last century for the country, we must do now for the city, with the same gospel, the same heroism and the same sacrifice.

4. We owe Church Extension to the people we evangelize. Shall we make men Christian and then assemble them in halls, store-rooms and tents to meet the Lord of all, while surrounded by the evidence of inestimable material progress and splendid institutions dedicated to pleasure and appetite?

Fathers and brethren, let us build.

Stimulated by the promises and encouraged by the protection of almighty God, let us multiply in every land the enduring witnesses of his name.

Let us express to posterity through the Church Extension Society our devotion and hope in Christ, the desire of the nations and the glory of his people.

Then in such hour of need

Of your fainting, dispirited race

Ye, like angels, appear  
Radiant with ardor divine.  
Beacons of hope ye appear;  
Languor is not in your heart,  
Weakness is not in your word,  
Weariness not in your brow,  
Ye, a light in our van. At your voice  
Panic, despair flee away.  
Ye move through the ranks, recall  
The stragglers, refresh the outworn,  
Praise, reinspire the brave;  
Order, courage, return.  
Eyes rekindling and prayers  
Follow your steps as ye go.  
Ye fill up the gaps in our files,  
Strengthen the wavering line,  
Stablish, continue our march  
On to the bound of the waste,  
On to the City of God.

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