

**THE GOSPEL IN GONDA: BEING A
NARRATIVE OF EVENTS IN
CONNECTION WITH THE
PREACHINGS OF THE GOSPEL IN
THE TRANS-GHAGHRA COUNTRY**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649090860

The gospel in Gonda: being a narrative of events in connection with the preachings of the gospel in the trans-Ghaghra country by S. Knowles

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S. KNOWLES

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INTRODUCTION.

THE preaching of the Gospel among heathen peoples is at once the most difficult and the most important work to which man can be called; the grandest and most blessed calling to which he can devote himself.

The best method of preaching to the heathen,—of presenting the truth in such manner as to attract and not repel, to win the hearer, and make him desirous of hearing again and yet again,—this is the great work of the Christian Missionary, from whatever side he may approach it; whether as an itinerant evangelist, or minister or pastor of a congregation, a teacher in elementary schools, or a professor in a Christian college or university, whether superintending missionary operations, or with pen and press he prepares a pure literature for the people, whether he ministers to the physical wants of those about him, healing the sick and relieving the poor, or perhaps better than all, or in addition to all, lives a life so pure, so good, that the heathen seeing, is won to Christ. This is his work, though not always satisfactorily or even well done,—whether he sees little result of his labors, or finds his efforts crowned with glorious success,—it is indeed a work that altogether

“Might fill an angel’s heart,
And filled a Saviour’s hands.”

Preaching, in its best sense is an institution, the origin of which is synchronous with the introduction of Christianity. The divine Founder of our holy faith, having “all power in heaven and on earth” given unto Him, authorized and commissioned his disciples,—not the few only whom he had gathered about him, but in a broader sense the multitude of his followers and believers in increasing numbers down

through the ages,—He commanded to “Go and teach, disciple all nations, baptizing them,” and said he, “As ye go, *preach*,” and the command to *go* was accompanied by the promise, “Lo I am with you always.” This is the Missionary’s great commission. What more does he want? Here he takes his stand, confident and conscious that he is never alone; that amidst the most difficult circumstances, in the most trying hour, help is always at hand, and “underneath are the everlasting arms.”

Preaching has come to be a peculiarity, a characteristic of the Christian faith. Though there were preachers under the Jewish system, and John the Baptist was especially commissioned to *preach*, to announce as a herald the coming of Christ, and point out “the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world,”—he was “as the voice of one crying in the wilderness.” The anointed preacher’s one theme, varied as it may be in a thousand ways, to suit all classes, and adapted to all circumstances and all conditions of men, is this: God, manifested in Christ Jesus for man’s redemption and salvation from sin. This central truth embraces all other truths, natural and revealed, with which the preacher is concerned. It is his great work to publish this truth, “the truth as it is in Jesus.” To do this efficiently he needs not only “an intellectual grasp of its excellence, but the consciousness of its power, as shown in the baptism of the Holy Ghost, and of fire.” When *this* baptism is present in the heart of the preacher, water baptisms will follow, as result follows cause. Let the method be what it may, where there is spiritual life in the heart, it will surely be manifest, if not immediately, certainly not many days hence.

Dean Stanley in his Introductory Sermon to Professor Max Muller’s Westminster Lecture on Missions, uses the following remarkable illustration as to how the best method of reaching the heathen world may be found. He says:—

“When the first Napoleon suddenly found himself among the quicksands of the Red Sea, he ordered his generals to ride out in so many opposite directions, and the first who arrived on *firm ground*, was to call on the rest to follow. This is what we may ask of all the various schemes and agencies—all the various inquiries after truth now at work, in all the different branches and classes of Christendom,—‘Ride out amongst those quicksands.’—Ride out in the most opposite directions, and let him that first finds solid ground call out to us! It may perchance be the very ground in the midst of this quaking morass, where we shall be able to stand firm and move the world!” Very remarkable language indeed for the learned and pious dean of Westminster. And some doughty knights in England and in India have mounted and “riding out” are now calling loudly that they have found solid ground, or at least a *via mediâ*, leading away from this “quaking morass” of doubt as to methods, and bidding others go in this new-found way, if they would have success in this great work! Thank God, there is no morass, no quicksand, and no quaking other than in the minds of those who seek for these things. Simple faith and earnest effort, with intense desire and honest devotion, have satisfactorily solved the problem, having proved all possible methods, and chosen those best adapted to the end in view, the successful preaching of the Gospel in India, and even the ultimate conversion of the world. Nor had these more humble and devoted ones far to go in their search for the right and the best way. The New Testament is a wonderful guide to any who may be seeking for light on the pathway of method or of duty. The Gospels and Epistles are full of divinely inspired directions for all such.

When the Founder of the Faith came upon certain of his disciples who had toiled all night at their nets, and taken nothing, His simple command to them was, “Launch out into the deep and let down your nets.” On another occasion,

when they had caught nothing during the livelong night, in the early morning He stood upon the shore and called to them, "Cast the net on the right side of the ship and ye will find." Obedience to the divine command will, with fishers of men as with the toilers of the sea, meet with its reward, in eventually "enclosing a great multitude."

The methods for the prosecution of this greatest work are multiform, and very various, and the talents and equipment of the workers are characterized by as great variety. The success of all is not equal; but there need be no discouragement, for the same divine master, knowing well the difficulties of the work, tells his disciples by means of a parable, that, of a certain quantity of seed sown only one-fourth part may be expected to gladden the heart of the sower when comes the reaping time. Or, as the sainted Bishop Edward Thomson chastely puts the thought: "Christ divides the seed sown into four portions, only one of which brings forth abundant fruit."

The writer of the "Gospel in Gonda" has not planned, nor even thought to prepare here a treatise on Homiletics, to show how *all* preaching should be done, and yet he has shown a plan or method of successfully approaching a simple minded people, convincing them in a very brief time of the superiority and power of the Christian faith, and bringing them to accept its truths and receive the outward sign of this change of faith,—by the simple, earnest, faithful preaching of Christ. Preparation on the part of the Missionary and his Assistants for each specific effort was always sought in prayer, and the study of the Word; prayer for divine guidance and the divine blessing then and there on the word preached. The preaching, the praying, the singing, all was done in faith that God would hear and answer, that He would be present and bless the means used, that the Holy Spirit would convict and convince, and give light to see the truth, and courage to accept it. This method was pursued

whether the preparation was made just previous to standing in the presence of one hundred or of ten thousand hearers in the great *melás* of the cities and shrines, or seated on the humble string *charpai*, addressing in simpler language a small company of village people, in the more populous regions of the garden of India, or in the jungles on the borders of Nepal. Although all the good that was hoped for on the part of the Missionary and those who have watched the work with intense interest, may not have been accomplished, and all the fruit may not have been successfully gathered, it seems clearly demonstrated that the method pursued leads to assured success when there are facilities for properly following it up,—when there is an organized force behind it sufficient and ready to follow the work with the necessary after work, and to conserve its results. When a single individual or a whole village receives baptism, having accepted the faith of Christ, the real work is only fairly begun. Much teaching, “line upon line, line upon line,” will still be needed to carry on the work so hopefully begun, to bring it to the most successful conclusion, and to accomplish the highest results of evangelism, of true gospel preaching. The much discussed question of early baptism, or “instantaneous baptism” as it is wrongly and sometimes invidiously called, is not nearly so difficult a one as that of the immediately subsequent teaching of the new convert,—the following up of the lessons already given. The primary teaching must frequently of necessity be limited, for there is often not time to do more than give a discourse, followed usually by the simple gospel teaching of one or more native assistants, and then the distinctive rite; and the Missionary must move on to other towns and villages. If those who seem most bitterly opposed, and honestly so, to speedy baptism, will look over the churches or Christian communities with which they are connected, and say they find no cases of falling away *after* baptism on the part of those who have had months or perhaps

years of previous instruction, then, and then only should they feel tempted to "throw the first stone." Careful observation shows that as large a percentage of the early-baptized remain firm, if they have proper teaching, as of those taken from their villages to the Mission compound and taught there; and in addition to this, their simpler manner of village life as to food and drink and dress, runs less risk of being injuriously affected by imitation of the habits of some dwellers even in Mission compounds. The first great step in winning souls is, to get hold of the people, to get their sympathies, to get near them, and make them feel that their interests and those of the Missionary are one. This can be done in no way nearly so speedily and effectually as by the rite of baptism; then their hearts can be touched, they can be taught at leisure, and may ripen into strong Christian characters, and some even into earnest workers. That church or society which is ready to follow up the work of the baptizing evangelist by the effective teaching and training of the new converts, giving them at once mental illumination and soul-culture, will certainly be counted most worthy to reap the rich harvest of souls surely awaiting this work. For the solution of this problem, the carrying on to a successful issue of a work so well begun, all Missionary laborers, in short the whole Christian church, should be equipped and ready. After that, the millennium.

J. W. WAUGH.

Allahabad,
7th August, 1889. }