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The Missionary Review of the World

AN ILLUSTRATED MONTHLY RECORD OF PROGRESS AND OPPORTUNITY IN WORLD-WIDE CHRISTIAN MISSIONS

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SIGNS OF THE TIMES

CHINESE PRAYER FOR EUROPE

A SECOND time the officials of the Chinese Republic have called upon the Christian churches in the land for a season of special prayer. On April 27, 1913, prayer was sought for China, to-day it is for those suffering from the terrible war in Europe. By the advice or invitation of President Yuan Shi Kai, Sunday, October 18, 1914, was set aside as such a day of prayer for Europe, and representatives of the Republic were present at many of the services. In Amoy, for instance, there were present the Taotai Wang Shou Chen; the Su-beng Magistrate, Lai Ju Lin; also Hsin Kuei Fang, the second in command of the Amoy Forts; Wang Ch'en Chang, Chief of Police; and Chen Ngen Tao, Diplomatic Officer of Amoy. The Taotai spoke in part as follows:

"We meet here this afternoon to pray for peace, and I am exceedingly glad to have a part in these exercises. As I see it there is not a man that does not desire happiness—not a man that does not desire to see peace reigning everywhere throughout the world. This war, the result of militarism, has torn the world to pieces. The President of the United States tried his best to act as peacemaker but adverse forces were too strong. And now man having reached the limit of his resources, we come and pray for help from Heaven.

"The Book of Odes tells us that the great God rules all under Heaven, and with splendid power influences the nations of the world for peace. The Historical Classic says: 'Heaven pities the people and most certainly hears their cry in the time of need . . .' Heaven does not want strife, and will assuredly understand your purpose. Washington was a man of prayer and in the time of the Revolution a portion of every day was

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PASTORS STUDYING HOME MISSIONS AS A SOCIAL FORCE
Maryland Ministers studying country-life problems at the State Agricultural College, in August, 1914

Home Missions as a Social Force

BY REV. CHARLES L. THOMPSON, D.D., LL.D.

SO rapid has been the development of social forces in mission work that there is some danger lest they hold too large a place on the stage of Christian activities. This emphasis on social force is of recent growth. One need not go very far back in the history of missions to discover an almost radical change of emphasis and perspective.

Slowly at first, but steadily, the history of home missions in America has been a history of the broadening of its contents and meaning from the individual to the community. The first missionary enterprises of the country were exclusively individualistic. It was the *man* the missionary sought—the man in his relations to eternity but separated from relations to the community in which he lived.

The Jesuit missions along the northern borders of the United States were a crusade for individual salvation—but that salvation meant only the deliverance of the soul from future penalties. As a result of those missions, which were heroic in the highest degree, nothing of permanent value remained to another genera-

tion. Indeed, nothing of permanent value could remain because the eternal values of the future life were the only ones considered.

There is scarcely even a ruin to tell where the feet of those early missionaries trod. The record of their labors is found in the volume of the historian, but never along the path of their missionary enterprises. The wilderness, a generation after their labors, was empty of any sign that ever they had preached and toiled.

Individual Evangelism

The evangelical missions of a hundred years or more ago were also conducted almost wholly from the standpoint of the individual. The evangelists in the mountains of Kentucky and Tennessee gathered great multitudes around them, preached a gospel of personal salvation, wakened whole States to the call for the surrender of individual will to the will of the Master, but made little appeal that was calculated to reform communities where those converts lived. At times social immorality even flourished side by side with revival activities.

The same may be said of the cir-

cuit riders in the Central West. There are no finer examples of Christian heroism and the devotion of men who left eastern homes or went out from eastern seminaries at the call of scattered settlers throughout the vast regions of the Mississippi valley. They were burdened with one great message,—the appeal for personal salvation, and the meaning of salvation itself centered largely, sometimes exclusively, around the idea of preparation for death and readiness for Heaven. Such work, when successful, was marked by revivals of religion which had a marked effect on the moral tone of communities. Multitudes professed faith in Christ; they were enrolled as members in churches which grew, with the growth of the neighborhood, to be important factors in the spiritual tone of those regions.

This individualistic meaning of home missions continued far on to recent times. It marked all the western home mission development. Under its influence churches were founded, membership was increased, and church ordinances were observed in thousands of western communities. This work of the home missionary is responsible for any thing of high moral tone now to be found in the villages, towns and cities of the West. Senator Hoar of Massachusetts, not long before his death, said on the floor of the United States Senate that he who would make record of the rapid advance of western civilization must take the home missionary into first account.

I recall the signal home mission achievements of Wisconsin as they were fifty years ago. A band of half a dozen Princeton graduates

sought that territory, and pledged themselves to missionary service for its redemption. They were splendid men of large intellectual caliber, of unsurpassed spirit and devotion. Wisconsin is a State of high moral ideals to-day largely because those men and others like them put the stamp of their devotion upon it in the early days. Their work was largely individualistic. In new and scattered communities it is almost necessarily so. The social forces had scarce found themselves. The individual, the family, the church—these comprise the moral life of small hamlets and scattered communities. With this limited impact on the growing life of the State it was quite natural that the minister should find the limiting of his field and of his responsibility.

It was scarcely, therefore, a matter for surprize that the social forces of evil suddenly or slowly springing up around him awakened the missionary to the fact that his ministry had not met all the needs of the people to whom he was giving his message. Moral and religious forces were not adequately organized, and, with unorganized Christian elements, he was conducting a battle against evils entrenched and growing strong almost before he was aware of their existence. These evil forces were so thoroughly organized that he was not able to meet them on equal terms. Or, perhaps, seeing the enemy gaining, and realizing that his message was not equipping good people for successful battle, he has declined the fight, and has gone on preparing people for death and Heaven, scarce knowing that this was not wholly fulfilling the command of the Mas-



AN EXAMPLE OF HOME MISSIONS AS A SOCIAL FORCE
Italians studying English in classes at the Green Street Church, San Francisco

ter when He said, "Go and evangelize all nations."

We would not undervalue these early individualistic missionary labors—because always the individual tells on the community for good or ill. A good man is, as Christ said, preservative salt and informing light. Character tells far beyond any conscious intent. God has ordained that the Gospel of the Kingdom should act by contact; and whether men will it or no, what they are becomes a force to make others like them.

Confronting Social Problems

But the social force of home missions has a wider and more definite meaning; a meaning prest on the consciousness of the Church by the trend of modern events. Problems

are emerging and confronting all good men which can not be dealt with by passive goodness. Christianity is coming to a battle line which she did not elect—but which she can not decline. It is not too much to say that a spirit of intellectual unrest, regarding the province and capacity of our religion to deal with life in its social relations has come over many earnest minds—an unrest which is turning many people for the time being away from the Church, and making them inquire whether there is not some better way to meet the troubles of society than any which the Church can suggest and supply.

Socialism is the concrete expression of that unrest. The Church has not accomplished what she was founded

for—has not incarnated the spirit of her Master—has not carried out His program. Therefore, those who hold these views seek for something else. They will not find it. The panacea for human ills, individual or corporate, is not in denying or ignoring the power resident in the Church, but in awakening its activity and giving direction to that power.

The present time is full of signs that the Church must arise to her responsibility as the one efficient moral and spiritual force of the world, or she must lose her influence. More is at stake than her orthodoxy. Her right to moral leadership is at stake. A few generations ago such a statement would have been cause for alarm, for not only was the Church not doing her full duty toward the social life of the world, she was not even conscious of her failure, because no attack that threatened her life was made upon her. Creeds were questioned, and she defended herself bravely and successfully. She held her own dogmatically. The truth was hers—and hers was the logic by which she could maintain it.

But the attack has shifted. Men are not so much concerned about the propositions in which the truth is formulated. They are now questioning the life the Church is living under the banner of those truths. Is she squaring herself with her doctrines? In many past ages this question would have had piercing power. It still has edge and point. But the one hopeful and assuring sign is in the fact that the question is no longer wholly from the outside. The Church herself is raising it more sharply than her enemies. That she has failed to fully interpret her own

gospel and fully meet her duties—not to individual men, but to men in various corporate relations—this is her confession and the signal of her awaking strength. Nor is it to her discredit that a battle call has forced her awaking. Ever in all centuries she has matched the occasions. She has been resourceful to meet what the times demanded. She has known for what time she has been called to the Kingdom.

The time has now fully come when the Church must address herself to meet and repair the wrongs of society, to which she has long been measurably indifferent. At the best, she has been complaisant where she should have been antagonistic and uncompromising. If any say that so we will lose hold on or fail in emphasis for the necessity of personal salvation it must be said that only by maintaining that emphasis can there be any good hope for a successful social battle. Only the men and women who by personal faith and consecration have taken hold of the hand of God—only they will be fit or efficient in the broader struggle for the redemption of men.

Modern Methods

Let us now glance at the lines along which the Church is trying to meet her social obligations in the home mission enterprises. When the missionary was preaching only to scattered settlers on frontier farms, his personal message may have seemed to comprise his duty. To tell the man on the farm to be a good man, a good son, husband, father, and perhaps once a year to vote an honest ticket, may have measured his duty. But quicker than he could

realize, the settlement became a community, the village became a town, perhaps a city. Then came the attritions of life. People were thrown against each other—were bruised, beaten, enraged. Then came social alienations, conflicts—classes ranged on this side and that. Injustice came in, and with it came reprisals, and before the preacher knew it he was in the midst of a battle. Civilization was bringing on its problems. Life was no longer simple. It was complicated and difficult and dangerous.

Now what had the preacher to say! Men were at war with each other, and it was neither satisfying nor commanding to tell them to be good and they would go to Heaven when they die. It is said it is no use to talk peace just now to the contending hosts in Europe. They must first fight it out. And so it is not enough to speak eternal peace to men in an economic or industrial fight. They must first settle the battle on hand. Show them the way to a right kind of a victory in that battle and they will be ready for the next message.

So the gravest home mission problem to-day is a social problem, and if the Gospel has any social force now is the time to bring it out. Unless the missionary in the mining camps of Colorado has conceived his message in these ampler terms he is having a hard time of it. He will preach eternal hope to dull ears of those whose earthly life seems to them an eternal despair. The Gospel came to build God's Kingdom among men by establishing relations of justice, charity and brotherhood. That Kingdom has not yet been built. Not only so—too often the Church, the great builder, has declined the media-

tion she alone can effectively give or has thrown her power with worldly powers that were increasing human burdens and postponing human brotherhood.

The hopeful sign is that a change is coming—has come. The Church, too slowly for her own good, but at last, is taking her leadership in social reconstruction. That leadership was slipping away from her. Other and less competent hands were reaching for it. Now the missionary forces feel they must come to close quarters with social troubles and heal them or be beaten in their chief commission.

Take the questions of class antagonism with all that goes with them. The Church was on the verge of losing the people—and losing the people would mean defeat. Not 10 per cent. of the working classes attended church. More than that, a feeling of hostility was growing up which boded no good for either Church or society. Working men in London while cheering the name of Christ were anathematizing the Church. Something must be done. Within the last decade something has been done.

First, the Presbyterian Church—and in swift succession the Episcopal, Methodist, Baptist, Congregational, and other churches, have address themselves to a social gospel for the meeting of social questions on the basis of Christian truth and the winning of alienated or indifferent people back to the Church—the best friend of the working man.

The success of these efforts has attested the willingness of people to yield to the highest appeals and to acknowledge the old-time power of the Gospel over all classes and conditions of mankind. It were too

much to say that full success has been achieved until the Church becomes courageous enough to claim her right to speak to both sides in the conflicts between labor and capital, and to speak with equal emphasis. She must not only be kind and considerate to the one class, she must dare to impeach the other class with its serious wrongdoing, with its greed and lust for power, and ambition for conquest. It is easy for the missionary in the slums of New York to open chapel doors and give welcome to over-burdened men and women. It is not so easy for the preacher on the avenue to arraign capital for its merciless grip on those over-burdened people. But until pity and courage shall go hand in hand the missionary has a hopeless task.

It is to be feared the equal emphasis is still lacking. Missionary organizations are fairly well equipped to meet the social needs growing out of poverty and the wrong industrial conditions which make poverty. They have given themselves with hopeful enthusiasm to the task of making the unchurched masses feel that the Church is their friend and can be their savior. But the work will lag, and the fruits of it fail until the message and the missionary efforts cease to be one-sided. There must be a repetition of the messages of the old prophets denouncing extortion and oppression, and making it plain that those who persist in such things must count on the uncompromising opposition and arraignment of the Church of Jesus Christ.

In this view of duty to society it is manifest that home missions is not an enterprise of the West only. It has a special call to the more crowd-

ed communities of the East. Indeed, the crowding largely makes the mission field—certainly in its social aspects. Hence New York is the greatest home mission field in the country. There the greatest extremes meet, and there is the collision between classes, acknowledged or suppressed, the sharpest and most threatening.

It is further accentuated by the race question also in its most acute form in the metropolis. And of the immigration question it may truly be said the social gospel is the only effective solution. Unless Christian truth can be brought to bear on our vast amalgam of races, all educational and philanthropic movements will largely fail. These aliens—not the off-scouring, but for the most part the best of the races, whence they come, the people with vision and longing and hope—need many things at our hands; but nothing so much as a gospel not only of personal salvation but of social power which shall teach them how to live among strangers in brotherhood and helpfulness—how to have a share in the moral upbuilding of the community.

In yet another direction does the social force of home missions strikingly appear. I refer to the upbuilding of rural communities. That there is any problem in country life is a new idea. Of all regions the country was supposed to be free from problems. Life there was simple, direct, comfortable, healthful and independent. What occasion had the farmers for knitting their brows over social conditions? Their only trouble was an occasional failure of crops; but, granted full harvests, all the rest was easy.

But students of economic, indus-

trial and moral conditions in the country have reached very different conclusions. They have sounded notes of warning which in the last few years have sharply turned the attention of missionary societies to the missionary call of rural communities. Some of the facts challenging this attention are changes of population from owners to renters; from American to foreign elements; desertion of farms in many sections; inefficient school system; decline of values, unproductive farming methods, and decline of morals. So effectively have these and other causes of country decline operated that thousands of churches have been abandoned or closed.

The call on home mission organization is to resist the whole order of this deterioration and to establish a new order which will bring thrift, intelligence and morality. It shall not be enough that the Gospel be faithfully preached. The country minister must know conditions—must be resourceful to meet them. It is sometimes said it is not a minister's business to teach farming. To which it may be replied—if he is not broad enough to see when farming is badly done, he is not observant enough to be helpful at any point of country construction.

One of the finest signs of the times is in the fact that so many young preachers see their chance; so many young and older preachers are avail-

ing themselves of country institutes to learn the science of rural upbuilding; so many who had fallen into the ruts of country ministerial life, are shaking themselves out of them and are springing with avidity to the new calling of vitalizing the moral and religious life of farming communities.

Did our young preachers but know it, here is the best post-graduate course available to those who want to get intelligently to the springs of American life; the finest clinic to learn how to deal with the broken body of community life.

With such purpose and power are the missionary societies giving themselves to meet this problem before, in northern sections, it becomes as acute as it is in some sections of the South, one may easily prophesy that soon our beautiful country regions will recover some of that charm—social and intellectual—which entranced preachers like Jonathan Edwards and Horace Bushnell in generations past. Then the country will once more become the fountain of civic life, and by its flow to the cities save them from the industrial, social, and political iniquity which now abound.

Our civilization is bringing many perils in its train. Society is staggering under them. But let us cheer up. Let the social power of the Gospel once be fully let loose upon these perils and they will lose their grip. In their stead will come the righteousness which exalts the nation.

KEEPING UP TO DATE

In all lines of business to-day men read their trade journals. Doctors read their medical papers, lawyers the law journals, and preachers a great many things: every man reads something bearing on his line of work. Every Christian should be engaged in the business of the Kingdom of God, and it should be the primary duty of each one to be informed about the progress of events connected with this Kingdom. No man can escape this responsibility for intelligent interest and information. Many ways may be suggested for keeping abreast of the present-day events, but we must read missionary papers.