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## The Irish Church Missions.

### PRINCIPLES AND WORK.

THE Irish Church Missions stand forth as having for their primary objects the Evangelization of the Roman Catholics. And through recent Amalgamations the I.C.M. is now the one recognized agency of the Church of Ireland doing that important work.

The Irish Church Colportage Missions, sending its travelling colporteurs to all parts of Roman Catholic Ireland; the Irish Society, teaching the people in Irish-speaking districts to read the Word of God in their own loved tongue—the Scripture Readers' Society with its godly readers working in the populous parishes in the North; all these are now one, incorporated in the greater Irish Church Missions. They have flowed as tributaries into the one greater stream—they seek one common object, and the result is unity in direction, fellowship in work, and economy in administration.

The primary object remains—the Evangelization of Roman Catholics—but while this is so, the United Society readily takes part when needed in efforts among Protestants. Such is, to a large extent, the work of many Scripture Readers; and such is much of the work amongst British soldiers.

The principles of the I.C.M. are to-day what they were when the Society was founded more than sixty-nine years ago.

They may be summed up thus:

- (1) Spiritual workers for spiritual work.
- (2) Unwavering faith in the authority and power of the Word of God.
- (3) The preaching of Jesus Christ as the one only priest, sacrifice and Saviour.
- (4) The faithful pointing out of the differences between the teachings of Rome and the truth of God.
- (5) Intense love for every man, woman and child for whom Christ died.
- (6) Entire dependence on the Holy Spirit, by whose power alone those dead in sin can be made alive unto God.

Holding such principles the I.C.M. sends forth her missionaries, and in the School House and Mission Church, in the country market and Dublin thoroughfare, in tenement house and on cottage doorstep, in medical mission, and in soldiers' hut, in Sabbath School and Bible Class, in Children's Home and out-door school, they are giving the message and making known salvation full and free through Jesus only.

There are many signs of God's blessing on the work, and for these we thank God, and take courage.

(1) The increasing circulation of God's Word. The sale of Scriptures during the past year by the Colporteur Staff has been more than double that in the previous year, nearly all the purchasers being Roman Catholics. In one thoroughly R.C. district on the west coast two men in three days sold 200 Scriptures.

(2) The certainty that many still bearing the Roman name are coming to simple faith in Jesus Christ as Saviour. We think of one often attending gospel meetings in a slum district in Dublin. She never became a Protestant. Recently she died; but visited on her death-bed she gave every evidence that she was on the rock.

Or we think of a patient at the Limerick Dispensary. She had always worn the medal of "The little Flower." One day it was missing. The

doctor noticed this and spoke of it. "I used to think" she replied, "that wearing the medal and praying to the 'Little Flower' would be the means of my salvation. I don't think so now. Now I know that salvation is through trust in Jesus alone. I learned that in this waiting-room."

(3) Public Reception of adult converts. Many of those recently received are most interesting and the genuine Christianity seen in their lives most cheering.

Amongst these we think of a man who two years ago as an armed *Sinn Feiner* fought upon the streets of Dublin against the Empire. A missionary visitor shortly afterwards came upon him. The man's talk was of the rebellion. His walls were decorated with the pictures of Sinn Fein leaders who had been shot for treason. The missionary spoke of Jesus Christ. Again and again he went with the same message. Soon the man accepted an invitation to come to the Adult Sunday School. He joined a class, learned God's Word, attended Gospel Meetings, and *found Christ*. That man is regular at worship, comes to the Lord's Table, and stands by mission workers when they preach the Gospel in the open air. His *Sinn Feinism* is gone. Upon his wall the picture of King William of Orange takes the place of the Dublin rebels.

(4) The good work going on amongst the children in Mission Schools and Homes is another, and a constant cause of encouragement. In one home the working of God's Spirit has been of late especially manifest in early decisions for Christ. A little child not five years old in an out-door school has become quite of her own accord a little missionary. For she taught a little R.C. boy living next door to her John xiv. 6; Matthew xi. 28-30; Mark x. 13, 14, and others of the well-known and much-blessed 100 texts.

(5) One of the most encouraging things is the coming across in many and various places of abiding fruits of work faithfully done in years gone by. Some such fruits you find in the Army—about 500 names of home boys are upon the Roll of Honour on the door of the Dublin Mission Church, as serving in the Navy or Army. Thirty-eight are known to have died in their country's service.

The loyalty of many is entirely owing to the scriptural training. We have never yet heard of a roll of honour on the door of any R.C. chapel in Ireland.

But it is better still to think of the many from the schools now good soldiers of Jesus Christ. Amongst them we recall the good Bishop of a Colonial Diocese, the Rectors of parishes in England and Ireland, a Missionary in South Africa, the matron of a Children's Home, and many others, some serving God on earth and some in the glory.

The fruits of work amongst adults are no less cheering. We meet a bright earnest Christian in a Women's Bible Class in London. She was found by her Saviour through the Dublin open-air meetings. We see a brave soldier in a Canadian contingent, who when the war broke out was studying for the ministry at Emmanuel College, Saskatoon. His eyes were opened to the truth, and he was led into the light through the I.C.M. some years ago. We find an English Vicar thanking God for the blessing the I.C.M. had been to his own soul, and we think of the visit years back of two simple lay evangelists to the country parish in Ireland where that Vicar was then Curate. They went with their simple message to the Roman Catholics—God blessed that message to another heart. A minister's life and ministry became transformed. We remember the bright Christian face, behind which there is a no less bright Christian life, of a man in Lancashire, once the cruel persecutor of his daughter because she went to the Limerick Medical Mission, now the head of a whole family who have renounced Rome, and are living for Christ. Not least we thank God for the many soldiers at the Front and elsewhere, who when in

camp or barracks in Ireland came across some I.C.M. workers amongst the troops and were led to enlist in the Army of Christ.

The transforming power of the Gospel is seldom more clearly seen than it was a few days ago in Dublin, when at a Conference of Mission Workers three earnest clergymen spoke in succession one after another. They were heart to heart messages, deeply spiritual. Those three men have been Romanists. To-day they are absolutely loyal, and they not only know, but preach the Gospel.

Statesmen have failed to find a panacea for the woes of Ireland. But where politics have failed the Gospel has succeeded. The condition of the country calls loudly for the application of the true remedy to-day. The prayerful and generous co-operation of all who would win their fellow-countrymen from superstition and bondage to the liberty wherewith Christ makes His people free is earnestly sought. To win Ireland for Christ : we know no higher form of National Service than this.

ARTHUR E. HUGHES.

