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THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE CHURCH TO THE NON-CHRISTIAN WORLD.

By the Rev. W. L. B. CALEY, M.A.,

Home Secretary of the Church Missionary Society.

THE closing paper to-day has to deal with the primary reason for the existence of the Church because the foundation of the sense of the responsibility of the Church for the non-Christian world is found in the very nature of the Christian life, as well as in the Commission and Commands of our Lord to the first group of believers.

The Church is composed of those who are Partakers of the Divine Nature, born again from above by the Holy Ghost. The Divine Nature is "Love"—"God is Love"—and love can never be self-contained. It is always reaching out and seeking to express itself, and in this lies the fundamental reason for the sense of responsibility to the world outside the Church.

Our Master's words to the first little group of disciples have, however, always been the chief apologetic for missionary work. It is this aspect of Christian life which receives primary emphasis in the teaching of the great Forty Days after the Resurrection. In the Synoptic Gospels it forms the burden of the post-Easter passages. St. Mark records the command of the Angel to the women who were early at the Sepulchre, "Go your way, tell His disciples and Peter," and that of the Lord to the eleven, "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature" and records that the command was so distinct and so clearly understood that "they went forth and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them." St. Matthew also records the command of the Angel to the women, "Go quickly and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead," and of the Lord, "Go tell my brethren," and adds the great Commission more fully than St. Mark, "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth. Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost." St. Luke adds in connection with the appearance to the Eleven, "that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His Name among all nations." The Fourth Gospel also records the command to Mary, "Go to My brethren" and adds to our knowledge of the events on the evening of Easter Day the commission to the disciples, "As my Father hath sent Me, even so send I you," and later that to St. Peter, "Feed My lambs" and "Feed My sheep." To these Gospel records

may be added the opening chapter of Church History with the distinct and final exhortation, "Ye shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."

The sacredness of His last injunction is emphasized with all the force of a threefold repetition, at the three most important manifestations of Himself after the Resurrection from the dead—in the Upper Room in Jerusalem (St. John xx.), on the Galilean mountain where His disciples met Him by solemn appointment (St. Matthew xxviii.) and at His Ascension from Olivet (Acts i.).

These commands were not something for which the disciples would have been completely unprepared for the Lord had already broken through their Jewish conception of salvation with the words, "Other sheep I have which are not of this fold, them also I must bring, and they shall hear My voice and there shall be one fold and one Shepherd."

The development of the sense of the Church's responsibility for the non-Christian world is seen in the history of the Apostolic era. There was a danger in the first days after Pentecost of a different ideal to that of the Master being developed, the ideal of a blameless spiritual community, a group of believers who should rejoice in their new found fellowship and brotherly love, and live together having all things common. Such a conception of the Church was early destroyed by a series of blows which fell upon that primitive Christian body. The incident of Ananias and Sapphira shattered the ideal of a blameless spiritual community, the murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews because their widows were neglected, the ideal of "having all things common," and finally the persecution that arose about Stephen, scattered that original little group, and they went everywhere preaching the Word.

The Vision to St. Peter in the House of Cornelius taught that the Church must risk and adventure for the world's sake. Again the ideal was not that the Church should have no contact with that which was common or unclean, but even at the risk which such contact might involve must fulfil her responsibility to the non-Christian world.

To St. Paul responsibility for the non-Christian world was paramount. To take one example, his letter to the Romans hinges on that thought. "Obedience to the faith among all nations" twice repeated—in the first chapter and the last—was termed by Archbishop Harrington Lees, "the polar axis upon which the epistle revolves."

This sense of responsibility has never been altogether lost in the Church. Such names as Raymond Lull and Francis Xavier remind us that in every age there have been those who have understood the Master's purpose and striven for its fulfilment. It could never be altogether lost, for apart from this the Church has no reason for existence.

Professor Karl Barth in his book *Credo*, writing of the Church, says, "Its commission and its life are not two different things, but one . . . It is not a case of its having a commission in order then (alongside of that) to have its own Church life. Rather its commission is also

immediately its life." "If the Church is really in that fundamentally subordinate position of the limbs of a body to its head, then its very existence consists in its subjugation to Christ's commission, and so in its execution of that commission" (pp. 142, 143). It will necessarily be a missionary Church, that is it will not exist only for "Christians" and, therefore, so to speak, only for its own sake, but in existing for Christians it will at the same time exist for the "heathen," it will exist for the sake of the world reconciled in Christ to God."

Canon Barry lately reminded a gathering of C.M.S. laymen that it is illogical in an international world to conceive the Christian religion in insular terms. The Recall to Religion will be waste if it is not related to the conversion of the world. The greatest change which has come over England since the War is a new found interest by ordinary people in foreign policy. There is nothing like the same enthusiasm over domestic policy as formerly, but there is a realization that all parts of the world are interlocked, that events in one country have their reactions in another.

The renewed sense of this responsibility of the Church dates, however, from the days of the Evangelical Revival, and has been chiefly manifest through the modern Missionary Movement of the 19th Century. Underlying this movement has been a sense of personal responsibility. Evangelical religion is based on faith in a personal Saviour and consecration to a personal Lord. It was this, rather than a sense of Church or corporate responsibility, which underlay the world-wide growth of the Church during the 19th Century. In this personal devotion there is something we need to safeguard carefully for the well being of the whole Church. One of the outstanding features of this age, however, is the sense of corporate responsibility. There is, for example, a much weaker sense of individual and personal sin than formerly, but a stronger sense of sin in the community, of corporate sin. There is far less concern in men's minds about their own personal salvation, but there is a far greater concern over the need and safety of the world. The conception of Salvation through Christ is not so clear and definite as when applied to the individual, but there is an undefined realization that in and through Christ may be the way of salvation for the world. This corporate sense in the minds of men is in line with the view of the missionary task of the Church which is developing at the present time.

The results of the missionary movement of the 19th Century have cast on our generation a new and special responsibility. We stand at a point dividing two great epochs of missionary endeavour, the epoch of the missionary society, and the epoch of the Church. The responsibility for the non-Christian world is now quite definitely realized to be the responsibility of the Church. No longer do we think of congregations financed by western funds under a foreign leader, but of self-governing, self-supporting, self-extending Churches, each representative of the traditions and thought of its people, expressing the Eternal Gospel in the terms of its own experience. The responsibility for the non-Christian world is the responsibility of the Church, in the first place of the Church planted in a non-Christian land, in the second

place of the whole Church of Christ. The missionary society now works as the accredited agent of the Church and preserves through its organization that sense of personal responsibility which is necessary to a true sense of corporate responsibility.

This sense of corporate responsibility may not make it easier for the Evangelicals in England but we need to remember it is the outcome of a century and a half of missionary propaganda, and while thanking God for what He has done in the past, strive to give the best contribution we are able in and through the Missionary Council of the National Assembly, D.M.C.'s, R.D.M.C.'s. These may not claim the same affection as the older missionary societies, they are too young, that affection is based on service and sacrifice to which these more modern bodies have not been called, but they are the expression of the sense of the responsibility of the Church for the non-Christian world, and for that, whatever our society loyalties, we can thank God.

In order fully to comprehend the Church's responsibility for the non-Christian world it is, however, important to realize of what that world consists. The outcome of the modern missionary movement is that the Church of our Lord is planted in nearly every country, and in every quarter of the globe. "It is literal truth to-day that the work and worship of the Christian Church never ceases, each land picking up the strain as hour follows hour" (S.P.G. Report "Many Members" 1935). "In every land the Church of Christ is in being, and its members are proclaiming and interpreting the Gospel with a power and persuasiveness that would be impossible to a foreigner, however devoted he might be" (C.M.S., *The Church that is to be*, 1935-36).

Whittaker's Almanack states that there are 692,400,000 Christians in the world, of whom 331,500,000 are Roman Catholics. Christianity is the first of the world's religions in numerical strength, but Hindus number 230,150,000, Moslems 209,020,000, Buddhists 150,180,000, and the non-Christian world totals 1,167,110,000. For this vast number of humanity who do not name the Name of Christ, and for whom He died, the Christian Church is responsible.

It is utterly impossible in the time at our disposal to consider in detail this responsibility, but I propose to mention three major responsibilities which face us to-day.

1. *Responsibility for Educational work in Africa.* The past ten years have witnessed an unprecedented expansion in the volume of missionary work in Africa. In connection with the C.M.S. the number of adherents in 1926 was 406,000, more than double those in 1914. In 1936 they numbered 771,000. The Christian community in C.M.S. spheres in Africa has doubled every twelve years, and the native staff has increased from 8,600 in 1926, to 13,000 in 1936.

If we set these figures against the background of changes of the last fifty years we begin to see something of the responsibility which arises both from what has been accomplished and what remains to be done. It is a truism to refer to the vast changes which have taken place everywhere during the last generation, but perhaps nowhere has there been the same change as in Tropical Africa. In the last thirty to fifty years Africa has travelled a distance it took Europe centuries to

traverse. Mr. Basil Mathews illustrates this in the opening chapter of his book, *Consider Africa*, in the following terms. "Two pictures flashed into the mind. The first was of David Livingstone on the shores of Lake Tanganyika, excitedly reading letters from his little daughter that had taken two years to reach him. The second was of the octogenarian King Khama, of Bechuanaland, preparing a landing field for the first aeroplane flying from Cairo to the Cape within a few miles of the spot where he himself, as a small boy trotting by the side of his father, had seen David Livingstone come striding into the tribal town, the first white man to penetrate that land."

Again if we turn our thoughts to West Africa, which must always have a special place in the thoughts and prayers of C.M.S. friends, as being the scene of the earliest pioneer efforts of the Society, and also that of the largest sacrifice of missionary lives, it is amazing to realize that it is only 115 years since Adjai Crowther was one of a cargo of 200 slaves, huddled on the deck of a Portuguese slave ship, captured by a British Man of War, representative of the self-governing, self-supporting, self-extending Church in West Africa to-day.

In the Niger Diocese 70 years ago there was nothing, to-day there are 1,320 churches with 165,000 worshippers in the congregations, contributing £40,000 a year to the work of our Lord.

In the Yoruba country in forty years a Church has been planted in every village and thousands have been baptized and confirmed.

In the words of Archdeacon Dallimore, "There is much to thank God for. There are indeed shortcomings in the Church, yet thousands have found in Christ a Saviour from some at least of the evils of the heathen past and changing present." Looking to the future we need first of all to realize that the leaders of to-morrow are in our schools to-day.

The younger generation have been or are going to school and they are thinking a good deal.

African tribal life is disintegrating under the impact of modern industry and the social equilibrium has been upset.

The African is asking what is the secret of the white man's power and he answers that one great secret is education. Everywhere the African is seeking education. Dr. J. H. Oldham has said, "The fundamental business of government in Africa is education." Every year numbers of new schools are opened and Africans can be found in every University in England. Education is an instrument by which governments have moulded and developed nations, and we of the Christian Church have in our hands, to a large extent, the education of Tropical Africa. 90% of the schools and colleges in Nigeria are Mission Schools. In education the Christian Church has a great evangelistic instrument. The African Education Advisory Committee of the Colonial Office definitely attaches the greatest importance to religious teaching and moral instruction as influences in the formation of character. Their explicit policy is that religion is central to education.

In S. Sudan the C.M.S. has the chance of moulding the future of tribes and peoples by laying the foundations of Christian education.

The situation calls for Christian enterprise ; a willingness to face the facts as they are to-day ; ability to realize the remarkable opportunity of the Church in relation to the whole future of a continent ; readiness to use the forces placed within our grasp.

Christian missions have an unrivalled opportunity to take a major share in this work of education, but it is necessary for the Church to accept this challenge with a full sense of the responsibility it entails. It must be realized that governments in Africa cannot be expected either to rest satisfied with a standard below the best, or to wait indefinitely for the performance of a task which is urgently waiting to be done. (*Rev J. W. C. Dougall.*)

The root problem of education in Africa is the problem of personnel. Africa needs those who can bring fresh experience to the building of national life and character, those who will work with the Africans as, what Mr. Basil Mathews terms, "Companion Leaders." The problem confronting the C.M.S. is the shortage of men to fill vacant posts for which the money for stipends is available.

Mr. Mathews also reminds us that the African is a limb of a living body. He and his people are held together by living tendrils that join him to all within the tribe to-day and to past generations and the soil of his ancestors. The impact of the modern world is undermining these tribal loyalties, but the whole background of African life is a foundation upon which can be built a sense of responsibility to the Church and a realization of the Body of Christ, and through the work of education the Church has the opportunity of accomplishing this.

From this brief reference to one major responsibility of the Church in the non-Christian world, let us now turn to another no less urgent, namely—

2. *The responsibility for the depressed classes in India.* This is primarily a responsibility of the Church in India, but it is also one which must be shared by every follower of the Lord Jesus Christ. Let us for a moment consider the position of the depressed classes.

Mr. Godfrey Phillips in *The Untouchables' Quest* tells us that there are many millions of untouchables, roughly twice as many as there are people in Great Britain. There are 52 millions of real untouchables, with whom should be reckoned 8 million hill tribes and aboriginals, who receive the same treatment. Others would include another 10 million low caste people in the figure, whose place in society is very similar to that of the untouchables. This is India's most urgent social problem.

Mr. Gandhi has said, "Untouchability such as we are observing to-day in India is a hideous thing. It has degraded both the untouchables and the touchables. It has stunted the growth of 40 million human beings. They are denied even the ordinary amenities of life. An untouchable is outside the pale of respectable society. He is hardly treated as a human being but is an outcaste." These words remind us of those of Thomas Carlyle in his "French Revolution," speaking of the submerged masses, "Every unit of these masses is a miraculous man even as thou thyself art, struggling with vision and with blindness for his infinite kingdom, this life which he has got

once only in the middle of eternity, with a spark of Divinity which thou callest an immortal soul."

These facts alone make the untouchables of India the responsibility of all Christian people, but to the facts must be added the movement among these people at the present time.

The Mass Movements of India towards Christianity are no new thing. For the last fifty years in almost every part of India missions have been almost overwhelmed by one mass movement after another (*Building of the Indian Church*, p. 46). For years we have heard and known of them. In the Telugu country in the South where the movement began 50 years ago, Bishop Azariah, of Dornakal, presides over a Church of 174,000, and his work has called forth the prayers, sympathy, and support of the Church in the West. The Week of Evangelism in his Diocese each May during the last few years has not been without its effect on our own Church and has made some contribution to the movement of Evangelism in our own land and the Recall to Religion.

The last two years, however, have seen a real stirring among the depressed classes, not altogether a movement towards Christianity, but a movement towards fuller life, and in this a movement towards Him Who said, "I am come that they might have life and that they might have it more abundantly." In the well-known Telugu movement 112,000 persons have entered the Church in the last two years.

Since 1931 these Mass Movements have grown at the rate of 15,000 persons a month. The Conference at Nasik in October, 1935, struck a fresh note. At that conference Dr. Ambedkar, one of the leaders of the depressed classes, said, "I had the misfortune of being born with the stigma of untouchability but it was not my fault. I will not die a Hindu for that is in my power."

In February, 1936, in Travancore, 30 men, the executive of the community of Ezhavas, numbering two million souls, went farther, 26 of the 30 voted for becoming Christians.

These events have created a fresh position. They represent a stirring among the untouchables which has not been evidenced in the same way before. They do not necessarily mean that thousands are immediately going to become Christians, but they do mean that the Church in India is faced with the possibility of a host of illiterates streaming into it. In any case, it means not simply individual and personal conversion, but entire village groups, ten or a dozen families in village after village, deciding to become Christians, and asking to be taught the Christian Faith. At least three-quarters of the Christians in India have come, not as individuals, but in groups. In England conversion is an individual matter, in India a man usually acts not as an individual but as a member of a community. It is this fact that underlies the Mass Movements in India to Christianity. Within the body of Hindu Society and within Indian nationalism itself like a stream moving within a stream, a movement of 50 million people has begun. The Church has a responsibility for that movement.

The Bishop of Dornakal tells of 40,000 asking for Baptism. The need of village clergy and teachers for village schools is urgent, and

the results of this movement are seen beyond the communities of outcaste peoples themselves. God is using the converted untouchables to win caste peoples to our Lord. 32,000 caste peoples have been won by the witness of converted outcastes during the last ten to twelve years. A repetition is taking place of what St. Paul mentions in his first letter to the Corinthians and God is taking "the things that are 'not' to bring to nought the things that are."

3. In closing I feel I must also briefly mention a third major responsibility of the Church for the non-Christian world. We have thought of responsibilities through educational and evangelistic opportunities. This is a responsibility arising from the political situation of the world in which we live. I refer to the responsibility in connection with the difficulties and dangers which beset the Churches in the Far East, a responsibility which calls forth primarily sympathy and prayer.

In order to understand the position I would refer you to *Christianity in Eastern Conflicts* by W. Paton.

The position facing the Church in Japan is one upon which we cannot dogmatize, it can only be understood by the Japanese mind. Certain facts, are, however, clear, namely, that the strong nationalism of the present time has led to a fresh emphasis upon the patriotic Shinto rites connected with Emperor worship. How far a Christian can engage in these is a matter upon which opinion is divided. Some see in them mere patriotic observances like taking off our hat at the playing of the National Anthem, or on passing the Cenotaph, but it appears that the question of how far a Christian can take part in these observances and remain loyal to His Lord may have shortly to be faced. We need to realize our responsibility to try to understand, and to pray with understanding for our Japanese brethren in Christ in these days.

As true patriots they desire national solidarity and unity. Like others throughout the East they are impatient of divisions which have accompanied the coming of the Gospel, and there is a strong movement among Japanese laity to try to achieve a measure of unity.

We may well see in this another call to realize our responsibility to the non-Christian world in connection with the great subject of the Reunion of Christendom.

The Japanese Church is definitely under the control of Japanese Christians. The position of leadership has passed from the missionary, but they want the missionary's help. He is still needed, and there is genuine consternation at the idea that he might be withdrawn. Upon the difficulties which confront Japanese Christians only the Japanese can finally decide, but they welcome the friendship and advice of members of the older Churches.

The future of Christianity in Japan is a matter of great importance to the whole Christian world, and in view of the strength and importance of Japan herself, the Christian Church in the West cannot refuse to accept this responsibility of fellowship in prayer and service and to make every endeavour to strengthen the Christian forces in that country.

In China the responsibility is a different one. In the providence

of God the small Christian Church has an influence far beyond what its numbers might suggest. The Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek and his wife are both Christians. Others holding important posts are Christians. China is concerned with a series of conflicts—material versus spiritual, ultra-nationalism versus internationalism, war versus peace, Communism versus Christianity. Upon the decision of these issues much depends for the future of the world. The issues are largely clear cut and the Christian Church has a responsibility in connection with each that it cannot pass by.

In half-an-hour it is not possible to do more than briefly mention the major issues and responsibilities facing the Church in the non-Christian world. In the field of education, in the work of evangelization, in the sphere of political life, God is calling the Church in our generation to face big responsibilities fraught with grave issues for the future years. It is our part to help our people to realize what it means to be a Christian in these momentous days of the world's life. Upon the fidelity of the Church in our generation depends the hastening or retarding of the coming of the Kingdom of God.
