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THE

MISSIONARY SURVEY



HOME
MISSIONS

FOREIGN
MISSIONS

JANUARY, 1924

To The New Year

One song for thee, New Year,
 One universal prayer;
 Teach us—all other teachings far above—
 To hide dark hate beneath the wings of love
 To slay all hatred, strife,
 And live the larger life!
 To bind the wounds that bleed;
 To lift the fallen, lead the blind
 As only love can lead—
 To live for all mankind!

—James Whitcomb Riley

CHRISTIAN
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IS AMERICA A CHRISTIAN NATION?

By S. L. MORRIS, D. D.

ON THE threshold of each New Year it is both natural and profitable to pause and take our bearings—looking backward in retrospect as well as facing the future in anticipation.

"We take no note of time but from its loss,

To give it then a tongue is wise in men."

Soliloquising on lost years has little value except as it stimulates energy in attacking present problems and future responsibilities. Each additional milestone passed in life's journey calls not only for an individual personal reckoning but for facing our joint responsibility in bringing in the Kingdom of God. Are we accomplishing the task?

In his forthcoming Mission Study Book entitled, "The Romance of Home Missions," by the Executive Secretary, one of the vital problems necessitating consideration raises the question, Is America a Christian Nation? It must be courageously faced and its portentous import squarely met. Camouflage in the interest of mistaken optimism is disastrous. The following indicates in part the trend and bearing of the discussion:

Immense damage to the Kingdom of Christ is caused by the effort to depreciate and discredit the task of saving America. The suggestion and active propaganda, that America is already evangelized and is now a Christian country, are so subtil and so paralyzing to the energies of the Church, and withal so subversive of the facts, that it would seem almost as if the great deceiver and author of calumnies had "shrewdly stolen a march" on some of

God's most devoted saints by insinuating into their minds divisive thoughts for current circulation, calculated to quiet the apprehension of the spiritual forces as to the movements of the enemy until the latter had surreptitiously gotten possession of the citadel of faith. This abundantly justifies the inquiry and discussion of the question, Is America a Christian Nation?

Yes and No.

This question must be undoubtedly answered affirmatively as to its status as a Christian country but negatively as to being a Christian nation. This distinction is so fundamentally important as to justify demonstration.

1. In classification America is entitled to be denominated a Christian country. A map of the world recently issued indicates, by varying colors, the extent of the different religions and where they are to be found. Some other countries have two and three colors suggesting a division in their religious beliefs, but the United States is all under one color, which would seem to convey the idea that this nation is all Christian without dissent. This map of the world is technically correct in classifying America as "Christian," rather than Mohammedan, Buddhist, or Confucianist. In answer to the complaint of Jew or agnostic, attacking certain institutions or laws of the United States, the Judge of the Supreme Court was perfectly right in pronouncing America a "Christian country."

2. In its published ideals America is undoubtedly Christian. No nation in history, unless it were God's chosen people, was ever more distinctly re-

religious and missionary in the character of its early settlers. It was founded in the interest of religious liberty and freedom of conscience. The official charters and commissions, granted by foreign courts to these emigrants contain almost without exception, an explicit recognition of the divine claim. "In the name of God Amen," are the opening words of the Mayflower compact; and the full spirit and meaning of that historic document are summed up in phrase as follows: "or the glory of God and the advancement of the Christian faith." It must be admitted, however, that some interpret "liberty" as "license." "This is a free country," is the right—in their estimation—to do as they please. This is just the opposite of Christianity.

3. It is Christian in its fundamental principles. It is true there is no recognition of God in its constitution yet its government is based on the moral law. No state legislature or Congress would dare enact anything ostensibly contrary to the Ten Commandments or the Sermon on the Mount. It protects by law the Church and religious worship. It recognizes the Christian Sabbath—against the protest of Jew, Seventh Day Adventist and Infidel. It has written a prohibition amendment to the constitution, which has the official backing of the Government for its enforcement.

4. It is Christian in its activities. Its great charitable institutions for the blind, deaf and dumb, and its benevolent associations are all Christian in spirit. The greatest philanthropic heart ever known in one people, manifested itself in \$112,000,000 of voluntary gifts since 1918 to relieve the needy in other lands. Its educational institutions, whether conducted by state or church, for meeting the need of the indigent, have a Christian purpose. Its great missionary operations, though distinctively and exclusively conducted by the Church, in giving the gospel to the nations of the earth, en-

title America to the name of Christian country.

After reciting all these weighty considerations there are certain momentous facts which would seem to turn the scale in favor of the negative as a Christian nation.

1. *Statistics.*

From the viewpoint of statistics America is most emphatically not a Christian nation. In round numbers the following is a fair statement of religious conditions:

Population (Official U. S. Government Figures), 111,371,056; Protestants, 26,000,000; Roman Catholics, 18,000,000; All other Religious Organizations, 2,000,000.

This latter includes Jews, Mormons, Christian Scientists and everything which claims a religious purpose. This would leave at least 65,000,000 as identified with no form of religious organization. It is true these 65,000,000 include children under ten years of age and many who are notoriously friendly and patrons of the church, but would not their combined number be balanced by as many unconverted people in the ranks of Protestants, Catholics, Jews, etc.? Other religions have one decided advantage over Christianity. Even their nominal membership counts as 100 per cent Christianity cannot count its nominal membership as 100 per cent but must largely discount it.

The Year Book of the Federal Council for 1923 gives the membership of the churches in the United States as 47,407,251. This, however, includes as above stated millions in non-Christian organizations. The Federal Council divides their statistics into Roman Catholics 18,104,804 and Protestants 28,902,447; but these latter figures include Jews, Mormons, etc. Is it right to enumerate them as Protestants? Is it right to use these camouflage figures as evidence of the progress of Christianity? The Year Book also includes 18,000,000 as Roman Catholics in the grand total, and then admits that this

number should be divided by 2.8 to obtain the number of communicants—which would subtract additional millions from the aggregate! The Federal Council figures, including non-Christian organizations indicate an increase in Church membership for 1922 of 1,165,121; but after making certain deductions reduce the gain to 967,601. The official Government figures just received state that population is growing at the rate of 1,721,500 annually. Upon what theory or facts can it be contended that Christianity is gaining on population?

2. *Human Relationships.*

America is certainly not Christian in its human relationships judging by its racial and industrial conflicts. To be Christian in principle is one thing; but to be Christian in practice is quite different. Bitter race prejudice, shared alike by Negro and Caucasian, by Asiatic and American, is becoming constantly more acute and intensified by disappointment in the results—and hopes—of the world war. In the readjustment of national and racial problems resulting from it, diplomacy is more conspicuous in its display than Christianity. Is it not a mockery to send missionaries to Africa and burn Negroes in America? It is true that the participants have no connection nor sympathy with the deeds of the other, but can we avoid complicity in guilt

by repudiation of responsibility in the language of Cain: "Am I my brother's keeper?"

In the industrial world the conflicts between capital and labor, between organized Unions and the Open Shop and between competitors in business, are raging with unabated bitterness. Socialism with its spurious claims of brotherhood declaims against class distinctions and property possessions—being the ill-digested philosophy which Karl Marx left as his inheritance to the world, having within itself the destructive elements, which if left to their legitimate consequences will ultimately and utterly destroy humanity itself. Instead of promoting brotherhood, it is creating irreconcilable class antipathies and bringing about great "strikes" in the world of industry, which are not settled upon a Christian basis of the Golden Rule; but instead, the argument on one side is a body of United States soldiers and the argument on the other side is dynamite—all of which are emphatic contradictions of our claims as a Christian nation.

Is she entitled to assert her claims as a Christian nation, if she does not practice Christianity in her contacts and intercourse with other nations, but instead, like the Priest and the Levite, passes them by and leaves them to their fate?

OUR LIVES

Our lives are songs; God writes the words,
And we set them to music at pleasure;
And the song grows glad, or sweet, or sad,
As we choose to fashion the measure.

We must write the music, whatever the song,
Whatever its rhyme or meter;
And if it is sad, we can make it glad,
Or, if sweet, we can make it sweeter.

—Author Unknown.