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# The Reflex Influence of FOREIGN MISSIONS



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When Jonah found that God was about to have mercy on people who were not Jews, he fell into a rage. When Paul at Jerusalem said he was going to the Gentiles, the Jews cast dust in the air, and cried, "Away with such a fellow from the earth." Because they refused to be the light of the world, God took the Jewish candle out of the candlestick, and the nation went into darkness.

For the same reason the Christian Church went into the Dark Ages. It turned its candle into a dark lantern, and said, "So long as I see the light, I care not who is in the dark." North Africa and Syria and other lands, to which missionaries are now sent, thirteen centuries ago were starred with Christian churches. But they became self-absorbed. They forgot their missionary character. And God removed their candlestick out of its place.

## **Sustains and Quickens the Spiritual Vitality of the Home Church.**

What other result could we expect? "Go ye and make disciples of all nations, and lo, I am with you alway." If we want Christ's presence, we must obey Christ's command. The one is conditioned upon the other. To whom does God give His Holy Spirit? Let Scripture answer: "The Holy Spirit which God hath given to them that obey Him."

The Edinburgh Conference voiced a great truth when it declared that until the Church realizes its missionary obligation to evangelize the world, and until it enters upon the fulfilment of the same with all its corporate strength, it will never attain full power upon earth as the living body of its Lord.

The non-missionary church need not be surprised to find itself, sooner or later, a cold and dead church. In 1812 a man in the Senate of Massachusetts objected to the incorporation of the American Board of Foreign Missions on the ground that "the country had no religion to spare." It has been well said that if that objection had prevailed, by this time the country would have had no religion to keep.

Church history abundantly proves that missionary obedience and spiritual vigor and revival go hand in hand. The great English preacher, Andrew Fuller,

becoming alarmed at the spiritual lethargy about him, preached a sermon on the duty of the Church to give the Gospel to the world. He followed it up the next Sabbath with a sermon on the same subject. The third Sabbath the same theme was presented. The people then began to ask, "If this Gospel can save the world, can it not save our own children, our own community?" And from those missionary sermons there sprang one of the most memorable revivals in the history of any church.

### **A Comparison.**

The eighteenth century was non-missionary. The nineteenth was missionary. How do they compare in spiritual fruitfulness? Did the exportation of religion diminish the stock at home? Let the figures answer. In the eighteenth century, Christianity gained nearly as many new adherents as during the first thousand years. In the nineteenth century, in home lands alone, it gained nearly three times as many new adherents as during the first fifteen hundred years.

The spiritual muscle trained to throw the Gospel half round the world, sends it with all the greater force into the hearts and lives of those not so distant. If we build up the fire till it is big enough to warm and illumine men on the other side of the globe, the added heat and light will be felt first of all and most of all by those nearest the fire.

### **Stimulates the Faith and Prayer-Life of the Home Church.**

To overthrow civilizations and religions that were hoary with age before Christianity was born, that are held by hundreds of millions of men whose habits of thought and systems of belief and social and moral structure of life have been hardening through thousands of years into granite strength—to do this, using none of the ordinary means, neither military nor civil power, neither social nor official influence, neither financial nor material inducement of any kind—surely an undertaking so patently impossible from every worldly point of view might justify the declaration of the British East India Company, in the beginning of the nineteenth century, that "This sending of Christian missionaries into our eastern possessions is the maddest project ever proposed by a lunatic enthusiast."

Yet to this undertaking the Church has committed itself. Why? The one answer is Christ. The authority for Foreign Missions is Christ. The exemplar

of Foreign Missions is Christ. The purpose of Foreign Missions is Christ. The power in Foreign Missions is Christ. The Foreign Mission enterprise is the Church's supreme exhibition of her obedience to Christ's authority, her sympathy with Christ's spirit, her loyalty to Christ's purpose, her faith in Christ's power and promise. It tests and stimulates in her this spirit of confidence in and consecration to her Lord, it throws her completely back on her Superhuman Resources and develops her prayer-life, as nothing else does or can.

### **Furnishes the Home Church with Fresh Proofs of a Living Christ.**

The actual fruits of Foreign Mission work are such as to fill the Church with a fresh and rejoicing consciousness of the presence and power of her divine Lord.

Though the work thus far has mainly been, of necessity, foundation work, sowing rather than reaping, yet already in non-Christian lands there is a native church of two and a half million members, with adherents numbering seven millions more, a membership larger than all the Presbyterian churches in the United States put together.

The percentage of annual increase on the foreign field is many times that of the evangelical churches in this country; on the Southern Presbyterian mission fields it is about eight times that of the supporting home church; and this superiority of growth is increasing at a swiftly accelerating rate.

### **"Thy Touch Hath Still Its Ancient Power."**

The power of Christ to bind human hearts to Himself in deathless love, has not waned with the flying centuries. Col. Charles Denby, American Minister to China, estimated that in the Boxer uprising 15,000 Protestant Chinese Christians were butchered and that only two per cent of them abandoned their faith.

The dread of death, the passion for revenge, the strongest fears and cravings of our human nature, in our mission fields today, as in the early centuries, are changed by Christ into forgiving love and exulting joy.

A recent graduate of a Theological Seminary in China requested that he be sent to labor in a particular field. He said :

"My father and mother were working in that district when the Boxer uprising came. They called my father out into the road and asked him to deny Christ or be killed. He professed his faith in Christ, and they hacked his body to pieces in the street. They

called my mother out, showed her what they had done to my father, and threatened her with similar treatment unless she denied Christ. She said, 'You may cut my tongue out if you will; I will never use it to deny my Lord!' They cut her tongue out and hacked her body to pieces. My two little sisters were then brought out, subjected to the same test, and killed in the same way. I want to go back to that district where my father and mother and two sisters testified to their faith with their blood, that I may tell those people that there is no hatred in my heart toward them, but that I long to have them share with me the unspeakable blessing of knowing Christ."

### **The Enchanter's Wand.**

Among the most debased and degraded peoples of the earth, the Gospel is working such miracles of transformation that Charles Darwin, the great scientist, seeing them with his own eyes, was compelled to declare: "The lesson of the missionary is the wand of the enchanter." And in that very land where Christian missions were pronounced in advance to be the dream of a lunatic, the English Lieutenant Governor of Bengal has recently stated, "In my judgment, Christian missionaries have done more lasting good to the people of India than all other agencies combined."

### **Teaches the Home Church Lessons in New Testament Christianity.**

While the native Christians retain many marks of their former bondage to evil, yet they bear also such marks of the Divine Spirit as to make them in many things an inspiration and rebuke to us.

In a single city in Korea, ten thousand were added to the Church in three weeks. Why? Because with apostolic zeal three hundred and fifty teams of two members each were out doing personal work in that city and adjoining country, and one single native church was working through its membership in one hundred and fifty villages.

Not only in personal witness bearing for Christ, but in Bible study, in observance of family worship, in self-denying liberality, the Korean Church has a lesson for the American.

### **A Bishop Ashamed of Himself.**

A Methodist Missionary Bishop, visiting in 1912 the Southern Presbyterian Mission at Luebo in the Belgian Congo, writes:

"A marvellous work is this; the great congregation here of from 1,000 to 1,200; an attendance of 800 at Sunday-school last Sunday during a heavy rain; I heard 500 children repeat the Sermon on the Mount, the Ten Commandments, the Lord's Prayer and

at least twenty hymns; and this morning at six o'clock a prayer-meeting, in the midst of a dense and penetrating fog. I am fond of a morning nap, but I can not lie in bed when that bell rings, and realize that several hundred half-clad people shivering with cold will come of their own free will to engage in an earnest morning prayer for their families and their unconverted neighbors. No wonder the fire burns in their hearts. Such devotion will kindle a flame anywhere.

"Then add the fact that forty-four native teachers went out this morning to forty-odd villages or hamlets and taught the Scriptures until nine, came back walking from two to four miles, and took part in the teaching of boys and girls under the great shed, and all this without a bite to eat. I tell you it makes me ashamed of my religious life. It makes me feel like mending my ways."

Of the spirit of the native Christians, who a few years ago were savages and often cannibals, this eye-witness writes further:

"My soul rejoiced within me at this great piece of evangelism, wrought out by the Southern Presbyterian missionaries in twenty-one years.

"A mere handful of white and colored missionaries have gathered about them 8,000 earnest Christians, and out of this number 300 teachers and evangelists, who, while they themselves are under training, have daily under instruction thousands of children and grown people. Do you wonder that my soul stirred when I think of this being carried on for a nine days' journey on foot in almost every direction from Luebo as the base or center, and by LAYMEN? Not one ordained preacher as yet, and 200 of the force of 300 self-supporting.

### **A Challenge to the Laymen.**

"What a challenge to the laymen of our Church! We have never fully utilized this great contingent at home. Here is an illustration from the foreign field of what can be done. These men are not preachers. They do not pretend to be. They are Christian school teachers; they are expounders of the Word of God as they themselves have been taught; they organize cottage prayer meetings and establish and superintend Sunday-schools. They know God. I rarely have heard such prayers. They have learned how to talk with God, and with a devoutness of spirit which is marvelous. They are leading the people in the way of truth and right living.

"The work of these men and that of their missionary leaders is rooted and grounded in faith and in prayer. Think of three hundred turning out every morning of the year to 6 o'clock prayer meeting. Think of a semi-circle of cottage prayer meetings at Luebo every Wednesday night extending for two miles. I heard the singing from half a hundred different points while I was walking through the mission compound or campus, on my way to conduct the missionary prayer service in English. Is there any wonder that we felt that night the presence of our Lord? I thank God for what I have seen and heard. The half had not been told me."

### **The Book and the Life.**

Bishop Taylor used to tell of a wealthy Parsee in India whom he had persuaded to read the New Testament. Deeply impressed, the man declared that

if he could find Christians who matched that Book he would join them. He sought amongst the white people for the life of the Book; but reported to Bishop Taylor that he had failed to find it to his satisfaction. The latter then sent him among the native converts, receiving his pledge that he would make as diligent search there as he had made among the Europeans. In a short time he returned with enthusiasm to say that he had discovered men and women whose lives corresponded with the Book. He himself became a Christian and suffered the loss of wealth and friends for the sake of the Name, and when he died of violence in Bombay his last words were, "It is sweet to die for Jesus."

A tremendous truth it is, at once a testimony to Divine grace and a needed rebuke and spur to our home churches, that the New Testament experiences are today being reproduced most closely, not in our conventionalized Christendom, but in the communities of disciples who are freshly out of raw heathenism. If the home Church through Foreign Missions has a blessing to bestow, it has one also to receive. If it has a lesson to teach, it has also a vital one to learn.

### **Prevents the Provincializing of Christianity by the Home Church.**

The missionary enterprise keeps before the Church the true conception of Christianity. The distinctive feature of our religion is its universalism. Other religions are local, national, ethnic, for particular races and peoples. But the religion of Jesus Christ is for all races and peoples. To make it anything less, to change its compass or its scope, is to change its character. It is to put a provincial narrowness in it, and a provincial accent on it. Now, a provincial Christianity is not the religion of Jesus Christ, and a provincial Saviour is not the One who said, "And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me."

### **Holds the Church True to its Chief Purpose.**

The Church's supreme business, what is it?—to give Christ to all the world. If we believe that in Christ alone is found the truth that satisfies the intellect, the power that regenerates the life, and the hope that illumines the future; if we believe that to men's need of Christ there is no exception, and to His power to save them there is no limit; if we believe that He is the gift of the Father to all, that He died to make atonement for the sins of all, that He has been lifted up to draw all men unto Him; then we must believe that the Church's first duty is to give the knowledge of this Saviour to all mankind.

No one can read the New Testament without seeing that the evangelization of the world was the supreme thought of Christ. For this primary purpose His Church was organized, equipped, empowered, and commissioned by her Lord's latest and greatest command.

A church whose congregational life is not adjusted to this missionary end is like a ship whose prow is placed at the side or rear of the vessel. Its symmetry is spoiled, its progress crippled, its harmony of action lost. A Scriptural missionary zeal blesses the Church by putting the prow in front.

### **Antidotes Home-Church Selfishness and its Attendant Evils.**

When John G. Paton settled in his first missionary field, he and his family were so subject to mosquitoes and malaria, that his wife and child died and his own life seemed doomed. But upon moving his hut to a higher part of the island, he found he had gotten above the mosquito level, and was troubled no more.

So also many a church is worried and weakened by bickerings and dissensions that seem incurable. The way to get rid of them is to get above them, to leave the malarial region of selfishness and climb up to the missionary hill-top, where the horizon of duty is so vast, and the needs of a lost world so appalling, that the old complaints and differences seem in contrast, not only wicked, but petty and childish.

Many a church is like the Great Eastern trying to navigate in a mill pond. No great port to reach, no wide sea to sail in, no vast horizon for the eye, no great responsibility for the mind, nothing but a dead routine of little things to occupy the passengers and crew—no wonder they grow narrow and selfish, dissatisfied and quarrelsome, and the ship is often left jammed on the bank or stuck in the mud.

Every church, however small, is a ship built by Christ for the wide ocean. Its home is to be the high seas. Its horizon is to be world-wide. Its port is to be the discipling of all nations.

### **An All-Around Spiritual Tonic.**

The Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions tells us of eighteen churches which a few years ago adopted the plan of a separate subscription to Foreign Missions. The result was an increase of liberality along all lines. The Foreign



Mission offerings increased 91% above what they had been. At the same time the offerings for home benevolences increased 67%, and for congregational expenses 34%. The world appeal is a powerful lever to lift us to the performance of every Christian obligation.

After giving figures for his own church similar to the above, Rev. R. O. Flinn, D.D., of Atlanta, Ga., adds: "It is our candid opinion, born of personal experience covering more than fourteen years and in two pastorates, that a large-hearted, courageous liberality in behalf of Foreign Missions may be expected to exercise a tonic effect upon the whole church life, and to prove most stimulating in enlarging the activity of every line of Christian beneficence." Hundreds of such testimonies could be given.

There is nothing that so develops and liberalizes an individual or a church as identification with a great cause.

"While speaking in a church in Michigan," says a missionary worker, "I noticed among the audience a woman whose whole appearance spoke of the deepest poverty; but there was a light in her faded face which fascinated me. I took occasion to speak to her. 'Two years ago,' she told me, 'I learned for the first time of this women's work for women, and each month since I have been able to put something into the treasury.' Her bent form straightened and her eyes shone as she continued: 'When I have given my gift, I am conscious that I am no longer simply a part of this little town, or even of this great commonwealth; I am a part of the forces which God is using for the uplifting of nations.'"

There we find a divine antidote to that spiritual littleness and shortsightedness, which, as St. Peter says, "is blind, seeing only what is near."

### **Christlikeness.**

The niggardly church member who refused to make a contribution to this cause with the indignant statement that he would like to know what the heathen had ever done for him, unwittingly put his finger on one of the distinctive glories of Foreign Missions.

The greater part of our Christian service at home is among our friends and neighbors, from whom, even though they be unconverted, we usually receive thanks and grateful appreciation. If we love those that love us, and do good to those that do good to us, what do we more than others? Do not even the publicans the same?

But the Foreign Mission work is a supreme unselfishness. It is carried on for men and women whom the home church has not seen, who can render her no return of any sort, who at first obtain reward her efforts to help them with persecution, abuse, and murder. Twelve years ago, in one country alone, nearly 200 missionaries suffered martyr deaths.

If the Son of God came "not to be ministered unto but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many," then surely it is in her Foreign Mission service that the Church shows her closest likeness to her Lord.

### **Inspires the Home Church to Christian Heroism.**

Professor William James, in one of his books, speaks of "the remarkable way in which contemporary religion neglects the heroic standards of life." The prevalent dread of poverty and hardship among our better classes, with its accompanying worship of wealth and luxury, he pronounces, "the worst disease from which our civilization suffers." "What we now need to discover in the social realm is the moral equivalent of war"; something, he explains, that will inspire to hardship and heroism as war does, but without the spiritual demoralization that accompanies war.

If present-day religion has become soft and self-indulgent, where better can it relearn the heroic standards of Apostolic Christianity than in the records and work of Foreign Missions? The enterprise itself is one of pure heroism. Obstacles of climate and government, separation from loved ones, death itself in its most frightful forms—all have been met, but they can not stop the work. The pages of missionary history are ablaze with the most glorious examples of Christian heroism and self-devotion.

Think of young Horace Pitkin in China, while his wife and little son were in this country, being led out to execution by the Boxers and saying to a friend, "If you escape, send word to my little boy that when he grows to be twenty-five, I want him to come out and take my place here as a missionary of the Lord Jesus."

Think of David Livingstone, surrounded by countless difficulties in the heart of Africa, worn out by forty-five attacks of swamp fever, yet writing, "Nothing earthly will make me give up my work in despair. I encourage myself in the Lord my God and go forward." On he went, but he could not go

much further. His strength was utterly spent. His black followers built him a little hut and placed him beneath its shade. The next day he lay quiet. The following morning when they looked in at dawn, his candle was still burning, and Livingstone was kneeling by his bed, his face buried in his hands. He was dead; and he had died upon his knees in prayer to God for the poor people of Africa.

In his journal there is a touching entry, made on his last birthday but one. It reveals the motive power of his whole career: "My Jesus, my King, my Life, my All, I again dedicate my whole self to Thee."

If our home religion is losing the old heroic fire, as many think it is, the place to rekindle it is at our missionary altars.

### **Develops in the Home Church the Spirit of Brotherhood.**

It lifts the Church to the true conception of human brotherhood and responsibility. It opens our eyes to the truth that all God's peoples are made of one blood, that all nations, even the most distant and heathen, are members of the great human family, each one having the same inherent right to know God as revealed in Jesus Christ, and to call Him Father. It teaches that no brotherhood less wide than the brotherhood of man should satisfy the heart of the disciple, as nothing less satisfied the heart of the Master.

Our own ends, our own community, our own nation, are too often the boundaries of our interests. We will think of the other side of the world if we can make money out of it, but not of ourselves as bound to it by any ties of high motive or duty. Let us be sure that such denial of brotherhood rests under the anathema of Him Who loved and Who died for us all.

Modern invention has made the world one neighborhood; it is the Church's opportunity to make it one brotherhood.

### **The Bitter Cry of the Christless World.**

To a brotherly heart what stronger philanthropic, educational, or spiritual appeal can there be than that of a non-Christian world in which the average is less than one physician to two million people, in which ninety-five per cent of the population have their minds dwarfed and darkened by total illiteracy, and in which scores of millions have never heard or had opportunity to hear of the world's Redeemer?

Says a traveller, not himself a Christian, "One day I stood near one of the great temples. With me was a friend. While we stood there, a native woman came, carrying a little child. She took no notice of us, but at the foot of the temple steps she threw herself prone on the ground, holding the baby up in her arms. It was a poor little feeble, sickly child. And she prayed, 'Oh, grant that my child may grow healthy and fair like other children. Grant that it may grow strong. Oh, hear the cry of a mother, and a mother's breaking heart.'

"As she was going away, we said, 'Friend, to whom have you prayed?' She said, 'I do not know, but surely somewhere there must be someone to hear a mother's cry and keep a mother's heart from breaking'."

In all this universe is there anything as hopeless as a heathen's grief, or as dark as a heathen's grave? And, oh, what a change it makes when they learn of Him Who came to heal the broken-hearted, and Who said, "I am the Resurrection and the Life." Said a little Manchurian girl, in speaking of the flower-planted grave of her baby brother, "The grave has become a new place to us since Jesus came to our village."

From the Congo region Bishop Lambuth writes:

"The prevailing religion is one of fear. They are haunted by spirits real or imaginary. Life is a burden and the women especially become so weary of it that they frequently commit suicide. One was found a few mornings ago with her neck over a loop of palm fibre. She was dead and yet standing on her feet. Polygamy accounts for much of the jealousy and bitterness, and domestic slavery tells the rest of the story. I met a man this morning with a spear in one hand and a little musical instrument in the other driving two women to market with heavy loads on their heads. They had walked fifty miles. The story of the evangelist who is with me, and that of his wife, would thrill you. Both were carried off as slaves during childhood as the result of raids upon their native villages by other tribes."

### **Heathen Civilization.**

Brotherhood! the responsibility of brotherhood! Think of our brothers over yonder, with civilizations under which "women groan, and children perish, and men live like beasts." Think of the religions of Africa which teach men to slay and devour one another; the religions of India with their licentious rites and worship of brutes.

Think of those "nightly processions through the streets of Chinese cities, long files of young blind girls, decked with garlands for the sacrifice of lust; friendless, helpless, homeless; marching each with her hands upon the shoulders of the

one before her; groping their way through an endless midnight to sin and shame and suffering and death."

All that is heathen civilization. Confucius and Buddha, what have they done for these wretched victims of sin and ignorance? Nothing. What do they propose to do? Nothing. The only thing that can help them is the Gospel of Jesus Christ. And because He has given it to us, we owe it to them. Cried Paul, "I am debtor both to the Greeks and to the Barbarians, both to the wise and to the unwise." Not to recognize this debt is to say, as the first murderer said: "Am I my brother's keeper?" Blessed be the Foreign Mission work, because it teaches us the breadth and the claim of human brotherhood.

### **Promotes the Unity of all Believers in Christ.**

Face to face with the black mass of paganism, the disciples of Jesus feel, as nowhere else, that they are one. "In a country where people pray to cows," says Lord Macaulay, "the differences that divide Christians seem of small account." There they concentrate upon the fundamentals. There they all rally round the Person and Cross of Christ, and preach the one Incarnate and Atoning Saviour.

This growing unity, we might almost say this common front, on the Foreign field, is having a tremendous influence on all the churches. We are seeing, as never before, that the points on which we differ are small and few compared with those in which we agree. We are learning that the true unity among Christians lies in their common purpose, their common love, their common trust, their common hope; in one word, their loyalty to the same blessed Lord and Saviour, in Whom we all live, for Whom we all labor, to Whose radiant Image we are all to be conformed.

And when that day arrives which the Church's Foreign Mission work is speeding on, that golden day whose very mention sets Christian hearts to beating, when all who bear the name of Christ shall have eyes and ears for Him alone, then shall His dying prayer be fulfilled:

"That they all may be one; as Thou Father art in Me and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us: THAT THE WORLD MAY BELIEVE THAT THOU HAST SENT ME."