

The Modern Crusade

Addresses and Proceedings of the
First General Convention of the
Laymen's Missionary Movement,
Presbyterian Church in the U. S.,
Birmingham, Ala., Feb. 16-18, 1909

Edited by
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UNIVERSITY
OF VIRGINIA

Laymen's Missionary Movement,
Presbyterian Church in the United States,
Southern Mutual Building,
Athens, Ga.

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THE PASTOR THE KEY TO THE SITUATION.

By REV. JAS. I. VANCE, D. D., *Newark, N. J.*

It may clear the way for a better consideration of this subject, which I am to discuss, if we will keep in mind the minister's chief end as pastor of the church. I conceive it to be two-fold; first, the in-gathering of souls, and second, their development in the spiritual life. Everything else falls to the rear and sinks into minor importance when compared with these two supreme and all important ministries. He is to make everything pay taxes to the support of these two supreme endeavors. He may make for himself a brilliant reputation as a pulpit orator. He may or he may not manage to get into the limelight as one of the leading citizens of the community, and think himself "to be something when he is nothing." But, if he fails to bring souls to Christ, or to develop them in the Christian life, he is a flat failure as a pastor.

Now, if the occasion were different, I might have something to say about our ministry as soul winners, and I think it could be shown that the most important thing, when we come to call for volunteers, is to present to them the most heroic conception of Christianity. Christ calls people to him, not on the basis of what they get, but of what they must give. And, when we put before them this missionary enterprise, which is the thing that calls for the supremest sacrifice, every one who has a spark of heroism in his blood gets ready to volunteer.

But I want to speak particularly about the other feature of our work, the developing of people in spirituality, the growth of the Christian life. Even here I am not taking the highest ground that I could take in this subject. For, beyond the claims of the church tower, the rights of Him who won his Kingdom with a cross. But we will tarry on one of the lower levels. I want to call your attention to the value, to the individual church, of placing it on a missionary program and enlisting it in the world campaign. What is the best thing a minister can do for his church? Without a moment's hesitation I say that the finest thing that a pastor can do for his church is to get the church interested in missions, interested with missions, absorbed in giving the gospel to the non-Christian world. It will get right, everything that is wrong. If there are divisions in the congre-

gation, it will heal the divisions. It will get the congregation centered on this one object, and they will forget the divisions.

You will recall that old story of Andrew Fuller, who said that when he started in the ministry, his congregation worried him so much, that wherever he went he was confronted by a tale of woe. Finally he said he heard of a thing called "Foreign Missions," and he sent and got some of it, and started it to circulating in the congregation. The members became interested and he said, "Soon instead of my having to comfort them, they comforted me." If you have got any trouble in your congregation, get some of this stuff called "Foreign Missions," it will work a transformation. The sleepy will waken up, and the sour will sweeten up, and the stingy will loosen up and directly you will have a little Ecclesiastical Paradise.

Where is the minister that is entirely satisfied with the spiritual condition of his congregation? If you are satisfied with the spiritual condition of your people you are rather lonesome. There are not many like you. The minister to-day who is satisfied with the spiritual condition of his congregation is satisfied with mighty little. His aptitude is small. I am not speaking of all, but there are churches, and the number is too large, which are like a millstone around the neck of a pastor. The reason is not because there are no good people in the church, not because people do not pray, and want to go to heaven when they die. The trouble is that they have been running on a side track; they are not traveling on a trunk line; they are in a blind alley. Isn't it a fact that we spend a lot of time discussing the situation? We get together in conferences, hear fine speeches, and go away saying, "We have had a splendid meeting," but what of it? We have got to do something more than discuss the situation and pass resolutions. Is it not true that we often content ourselves with the fact that we are holding our own? We compare this year's report with last year's and say, "We are holding our own," and thank the Lord. Do you suppose we will ever reach the world with Christ that way? We have got to do something more than hold our own. Why not ponder over negative statistics? What if the church had one hundred converts and could have had two hundred? Suppose that we had one thousand in our Sunday School, what if we could have had two thousand? Suppose we gave five thousand dollars to foreign missions, what if we could have given ten thousand dollars? It is not what we have done, but it is what we might have done.

Then there are churches that have been trying to build themselves up into strong institutions. They think that a church filled with respectable people has scored success. When they have gotten the church filled with a good constituency and well financed, all their prayers are answered. The usual way is to seek a minister who will draw. Heaven and earth are searched for a man who will draw, and when "the Spirit of the Lord" has directed them to the right man, they get him and put him in the pulpit with the flourish of an imposing installation service; and then they sit down and say, "Now, brother pastor, draw: that is your business; draw hard! If you draw hard enough you will get me out to Sunday morning service. If you draw very hard you might make me break a business engagement for the mid-week prayer meeting, and if you fail to get me, your blood be upon your own head." The modern pastor has got to be a sort of porous plaster of pulpit eloquence big enough to cover all the sheep and goats of his parish.

Is a church a success because it has a fat income? No church is a success unless it is doing the thing it was intended to do. The church was put into this world for one defined purpose, to preach the word. Here is a factory built for the purpose of manufacturing harvesting machines. Suppose it goes to making baby jumpers? The church was given a definite purpose. Let the church stick to its mission. A church is a success only when it lays down its life for Jesus Christ.

The best thing for a sick church, is to put it on a missionary diet, to give the opportunity of life to the perishing of earth. There may be some churches that won't like that sort of a program. They may not want to be distributed. They want to be let alone. Did you ever know a man who was sound asleep, that liked to be awakened; that will say, when he is awakened, "Thank you?" I was going through an insane asylum in New Jersey recently, and as we passed along one of the inmates came to me and said, "I've been dead," but added, "I've been resurrected." I said, "Which do you like better?" He said, "I'd rather be dead." There are churches that prefer death to disturbance, but we believe in the resurrection of the dead. We must give them what they need, and not what they want.

They may call us fanatics, but I would rather be a fanatic than a corpse. This thing of missions, is the finest vision that can be brought before people. This conception of a cause that is marching through the earth, and going on improving, not for a century, not for

an age, but forever. We know something of a tree that grows for a hundred years and then, when it gets to the summit of its existence, tarries for a while and then decays and goes back to mother earth. We know something of a nation that grows for a thousand years, and by and by ceases to exist and is wiped from the map of nations. We know something of a planet that glows for a billion years, and then tarries at the summit of its existence, but at last begins to cool off and, as a dead world, swims out again on the vast ether sea. We know something of a sun that burns for a billion milleniums unconsumed, and by and by flickers in its socket and dies from the sky. But of the increase of Christ's Kingdom there shall be no end. We are enlisted in the finest thing that the mind of man can conceive. Do you tell me a minister can hurt himself with a thing like that? Do you tell me that he can hurt his church with a thing like this? It is the church's only chance for victory.

Now the field, as to ways and means, has been pretty well covered. Lots of good advice has been given this afternoon and in this convention. The important thing is to put it into practice. A missionary program should be set up in the church. The officers of the church have much to do with its success, but I do not think they can take the place of the pastor. While it is true that he is the key to the situation, still the officers of the church can block the way by opposition or, what is worse, by icy indifference. Yet the major responsibility rests on us as pastors. If a minister has been a pastor of a church for two years, and has secured no increase in missionary interest, something is wrong. What the situation demands is either dynamite or transportation facilities. There is a town near us in New Jersey where a dear old brother held sway for twenty-five years. Recently the Lord called him to his reward. He preached sound doctrines all along, but never was known to preach a sermon on foreign missions. A few weeks since Mr. Robert Speer preached there, and one of the elders said to a friend of mine, "We have had a young man by the name of Speer preaching for us on a subject he calls 'Foreign Missions,' and really it is very interesting." They had been living in a cave and were getting a glimpse of God's great out-of-doors, and they thought it was fine.

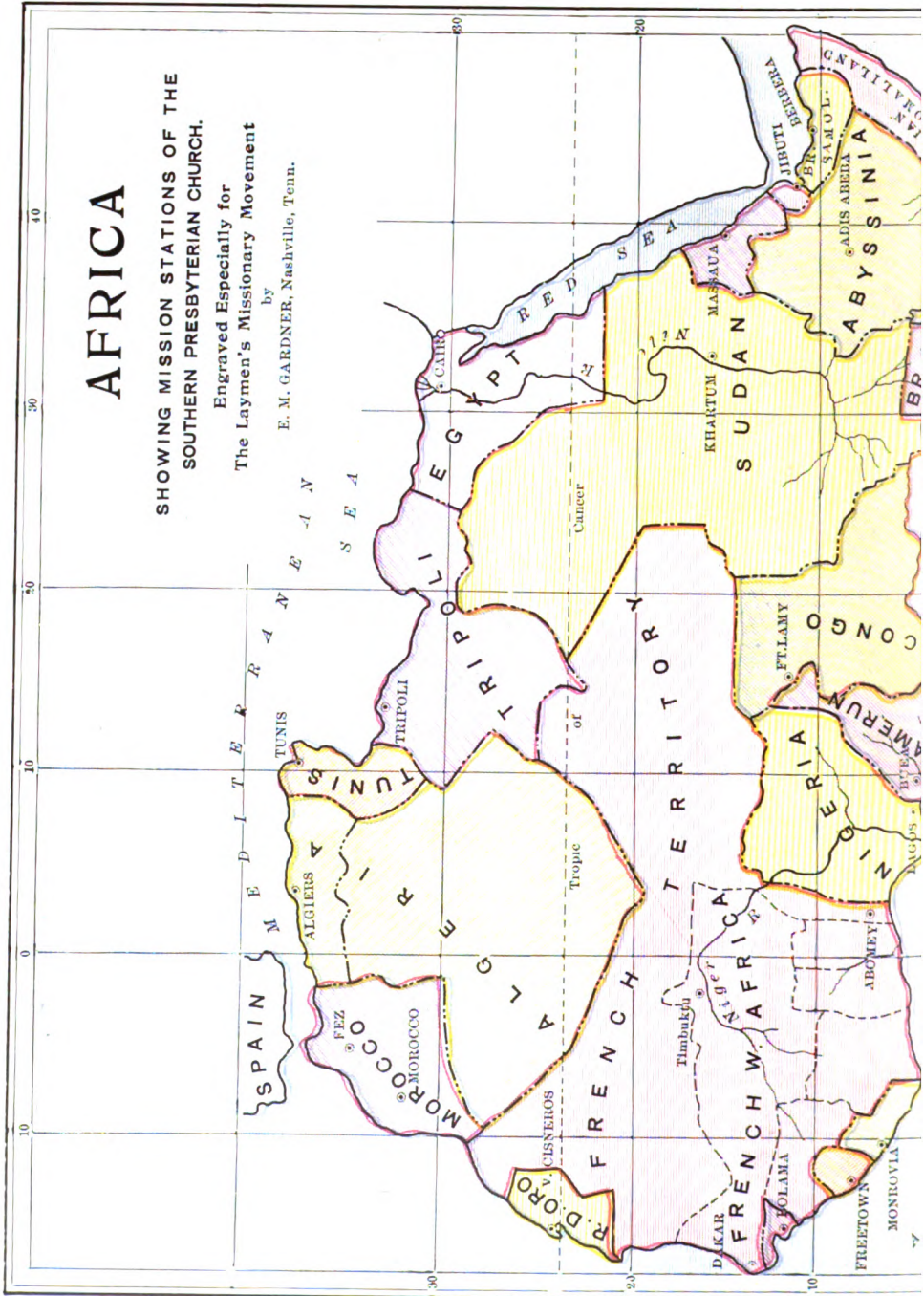
Now, I don't believe there is any freak about this business. I do not believe there is any special or only way to get the churches on a missionary basis. The way is to go ahead and the thing can be done

AFRICA

SHOWING MISSION STATIONS OF THE
SOUTHERN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH.

Engraved Especially for
The Laymen's Missionary Movement

by
E. M. GARDNER, Nashville, Tenn.





in some way or other. One of our Reformed Churches has for its pastor a young man who has had a suggestive experience. He had been preceded by a man who had plenty ability, but was rather sleepy and frequently tired. His people were interested in missions, but they couldn't get him to take any interest, and at last they bade him an affectionate and permanent farewell, and called my young friend as his successor. He had not been there very long before he called a meeting of his officers, and said, "We must support a missionary." They said, "We cannot do it; we couldn't take care of our own work and support a missionary too; we are doing all we can now." But he said, "We must support a missionary." So they had it up one side and down the other, and finally he said to them, "Brethren, we must support a missionary, and, if you will undertake his support, at the end of the year, if there is a deficit in the treasury for church expenses, you may take it out of my salary." Did he starve? No, and the Lord did not have to feed him with ravens either. At the end of the year they not only supported the missionary, but the income was larger for church support than it ever had been. I believe that we will always find it to be the way. The more we do for others, the more God will help us. There is one thing that a pastor can do; he can sacrifice his reputation as a pulpiteer to the cause. There may be a demise, but we could say over those remains, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord." Let him make appointments for returned missionaries in his church, when they come home. The returned missionary may not be a pulpit orator, he is the real thing. He is no tin soldier. He comes from the war, wearing a worn uniform, scarred by actual conflict; blood stained. His message, whatever he may say, is the man.

Let us have specialists on this subject in our pulpits. Some dear little sister, who loves her pastor, may not come to church, but her place will be filled, and there may be compensations in other directions. Let us preach, down right, out right, straight from the shoulder, missionary sermons. Let us give our pulpit the missionary outlook. Dr. Carson has scored a home run. He says, let us preach in such a way that no sermon will be preached without the gospel of foreign missions. Then it will be easy to preach without having to think of something to say, for we shall have something to say.

Let us make it a part of our pastoral work. Sometimes we run out of stuff to talk about. I believe if we could just switch off on missions we could always keep the conversation going. These pastoral

visits, if they could be brought into this subject of missions, could be made a thing of real power in the modern church.

Let us occupy our church organizations with missions. I tell you it would work a transformation. Some of us hear of a new organization in the church, as if it were a funeral announcement or another baby to take care of. The trouble is that the thing absorbs all its power on itself. It is like that steamboat that Abraham Lincoln told about, on the Ohio River, which had a five horse-power engine and twenty horse-power whistle, and that stopped every time the whistle blew. It is that way with a good many church societies. If we could get them headed on this subject of missions, there would be something for them to do.

It is exceedingly important that we take our young people into this movement, and this devolves upon the pastor. We must give them the information that will build them up. We cannot sustain this movement unless it is an intelligent movement. The people have to know the facts. The convictions must be supported by real facts. Let us seek for missionary volunteers in our congregation. Let us also seek individuals in our congregations to support missionaries.

The most successful thing in the world is foreign missions. Even in those days when no converts were made, it was successful, when the missionaries could do no more than go out and testify and die, when there was as yet no sprig of green or gold to proclaim the harvest. But now the success is spectacular as well as spiritual. Every week more than three thousand souls are lifted out of the non-Christian world into the visible Church of Christ. It is wonderful. The only problem that confronts us to-day is the problem of the harvest field. If we let this chance slip, it may be a thousand years before God will give us such another opportunity.