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THE LAYMEN'S MISSIONARY CONFERENCE

I.

The opening session of the Laymen's Missionary Conference at Chattanooga, April 21st, was a most inspiring occasion, and gave a high cast to all that should follow in the two days of the gathering. All the plans and deliberations of the leaders in the days preceding the Conference had in view the one distinctive purpose of deepening the spiritual life and convictions of the men of the church, and unless this object is attained, the meeting and all its labors have been absolutely futile. But the men who came to attend the Conference, came with the one thought above all others that they should have a world-wide vision of the work of God, and should rightly read their opportunities and their responsibilities in this day of power. The three words therefore that represented the leading idea of the Conference were **A WORLD VISION**. Our Opportunity, Our Responsibility. When John R. Pepper called to order the vast assembly of three thousand people at the opening session he uttered these fitting words:

"If there ever was a time when we ought to praise God, it is now. Let us stand and sing, 'Praise God From Whom All Blessings Flow.'" Dr. J. A. Taylor led in prayer and read the second Psalm for the Scripture Lesson.

The chairman used the gavel at this Conference that was used in the great Missionary Conference seven years ago at New Orleans. It was made of wood taken from the house in which Charles Taylor lived before going to China as the first missionary of our Church.

The songs sung at the Conference are taken from our new Methodist Hymnal, and are in themselves an inspiration when sung by more than one thousand Methodist laymen. Especially thrilling is Reginald Heber's magnificent battle hymn, "The Son of God Goes Forth to War," which marked the opening of this Conference. The Wesley Hall Quartette, composed of Culbreth, Luten, Mitchell, and Stanford, rendered invaluable assistance throughout the meeting. Not only was the rendering of their selections excellent, but the sentiment was in almost every case exactly appropriate. Nowhere was this wisdom of choice more evident than in their very first selection, "Come, Spirit, Come, With Love Divine." Rev. John C. Orr, Presiding Elder of the Knoxville District, was Conference precentor, and, assisted by two pianos, one cornet and a large chorus of trained voices, he made the singing a means of grace at every session.

Hon. W. R. Crabtree, mayor of Chattanooga, and a Methodist layman, welcomed the delegates and members of the Conference in a few well chosen words. He declared that the greatest resources of the South is the manhood of its citizens, and to develop the latent powers of youthful brains and hearts, the noblest work to which we can put our hand. The response on behalf of the Conference was delivered by General Julian S. Carr, of Durham, N. C. He compared this Laymen's Conference to the meeting of Napoleon and Alexander of Russia at Tilsit in 1807, who attempted to settle the destinies of mankind. This Conference of Christian laymen is assembled under the banner of the Prince of Peace to deliberate plans and methods of life that shall affect unborn generations."

The guest of the evening and the principal speaker was Hon. James Bryce, Ambassador from Great Britain. His entrance into the Conference hall was greeted with great enthusiasm. The audience stood to receive him and gave the Chauqua salute, and then sang, "God Save the King" and "America." In his words introducing Mr. Bryce to the audience, Bishop E. R. Hendrix referred to him as "this good grey head whom all men know, the most accomplished member of

the British Parliament, a great humanitarian who stood for Home Rule in Ireland, who deemed the Boer War unnecessary and who denounced the Bulgarian outrages. A great student of men and of institutions who wrote "The American Commonwealth" and "The Holy Roman Empire," a great statesman who has traveled everywhere, has seen everything, and knows everybody."

Mr. Bryce declared that he was on this occasion "the messenger of friendship, peace, and affection." The leading thought in his address was the obligation of Christian nations to evangelize the world. He said: "If you take our Christ from us, you take all that determines our national greatness. The duty we owe to Christ is greater than that we owe to the particular denominational body to which we belong. We are learning that there is another and greater task than to convert a soul, and that is, to elevate life, teach better principles of living to the whole mass of people. Missionary work is a great world movement, having as its central motive the purpose of stronger races to benefit the weaker. Pretty nearly all the world has been brought under the control of some civilized nation. This is a phenomenon new to the world, and will never be repeated. Yet progress in evangelizing the world seems to be very slow, and we ask frequently "Why has not more been done to save the whole world?" One reason for the delay is that in the contact of the strong with the weaker races, the weaker always suffers. Certain evils are inevitable, but they are likewise unduly intensified. In dealing with a weak and pagan race we need constantly to bear in mind our Christian duty to restrain from evil. It is the private adventurer who is the greatest enemy to the Gospel missionary. The United States and the British Government are doing what they can to administer justice and govern to the best advantage the weaker peoples under their influence. The duty of governments is to restrain the evil-minded and to protect the native. Let us forever forbid the sale of liquor to pagan peoples. The weaker nations are like children; it is our duty to give them the opportunity to grow into noblest manhood."

II.

The first day of the great Chattanooga Conference was remarkably well attended by laymen and preachers, and to the last moment of the evening service the interest was unflagging. The program was full of important subjects and more time was needed on many matters projected, but the mind and heart of our strong laymen were mightily stirred over the great issues of church life.

Ed. F. Cook declared that the church is unprepared for the unprecedented opportunity now before her. All the resources of the modern world are at the command of the church. All the nations of the earth are in transition. The church in America commands enough money and men to evangelize the world in this generation, if God could command the men and control the money. A tithe is the kindergarten teaching of God's teaching. Christian liberality means the absolute Lordship of Jesus and the faithful stewardship of man. Education is the solution of our problems. The training of young people must begin now if our church is ever to become generous, liberal and alert.

Dr. D. A. Anderson, of Soochow, China, brought a marvelous story of developments in that great Empire. The question of the twentieth century is to be settled in the East. The task now imposed upon Western nations is to carry to the East every good thing God has given us. We not only give to China, but we also receive from her. In the system of China is found a very great deal of God's eternal truth and lasting purpose. China

exists because of the excellence of its system of truth. She is nearer the ideal in some things than we are. We think the Kingdom of God is to be established by physical force. China abhors physical force, and deals with man through moral and intellectual methods, not through material might. The Chinese nation is the greatest commentary on the promise, "Blessed are the meek." She has not been built up by the sword, and will not be destroyed by the sword. But she is weak. The Chinese have not discovered their Head. They have been holding to the past, realizing that something is wrong, but not knowing what it is. To-day it is possible to reach every Chinaman and tell him the truth. In Soochow University are 218 students of the better class, all coming to pay for what they get and to study new truths. We could easily double our number of students if we had larger buildings and more instructors. In ten years we could have one thousand students of the best classes. That means that it is in our hands to train the future leaders of China. Soochow University needs \$75,000 to equip it for immediate demands. Then we need a permanent endowment, without which we shall not be able to meet the opportunities at our hand.

Rev. J. L. Gerdine, of Seoul, Korea, brought a soul-stirring message of life and movements in that humiliated Kingdom. He said that in Korea are 12,000 converts and 2,000 churches. Our Southern Methodist Church has 5,000 members and probationers and 5,000 are awaiting religious instruction to join the church. A most cordial welcome awaits Christian workers in every part of the country. The character of the native converts is a strong argument for Christianity in the end. Our Christians there are loyal to the church and to the teachings of the Bible, liberal and concerned for the conversion of their great revival now sweeping over the Kingdom, of its effects upon native preachers and members. He declared that Korean people are now facing a crisis in political, educational, and religious affairs. He closed with an appeal for ten additional men and \$50,000 to help meet the opportunity.

Bishop A. W. Wilson just returned from a prolonged missionary tour of the East, preached a masterful sermon on "The One Great Mission of the Church." He portrayed the character of the Church of Christ and its mission to the whole world, closing with an appeal for an onward movement by a united church, in which both preachers and laymen should recognize their equal part.

Rev. E. A. Tilley discussed the educational, literary and evangelistic work of our church in Brazil. He said the time had come for us to enterprise a broader work for Brazil. The Board of Missions is not able to do all that is necessary to be done in this land, but the laymen of the church can assist the Board by larger contributions. It is in our power to capture the intelligent classes of Brazil, but men and money are demanded.

The Christian Conquest of Japan was outlined by Dr. S. H. Wainright. He emphasized the fact that Japan presents to-day the finest opportunity the Christian world has ever had. The Gospel, he said, touches the Japanese heart and meets with a readier response than does Buddhism and Confucianism. Beyond any possible doubt Japan is capable of a response to a higher Christian service and devotion to the highest expression of Christianity in evangelistic effort in and for the church. To make the deepest impression upon Japanese national character our schools and churches must henceforth bear the stamp of greater efficiency.

Rev. W. G. Fletcher came up from Santa Clara to speak on behalf of Cuba, and right well did he discharge his commission. His plea for men and money was overwhelming in its earnestness. He asked not for sympathy and old clothes, but for an increase of men of grace, green-backs, grit, gumption, get-up and get. The only way to crea-

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