

Foreign Missions

BY JOHN COLE MCKIM

A thirty-year plan which would end the whole problem

PEOPLE in America who support the foreign missions of their sects usually give their money on the assumption, encouraged by denominational "literature," that the characteristics of their bodies, or of American Protestantism generally, are being reproduced in heathen lands. It is obvious that only by appealing to sectarian, cultural and sectional (separate Boards are maintained by Northern and Southern Methodists and Presbyterians) prejudices could there be so much duplication of missionary machinery.

I am far from wishing to see the achievement of this end. I would far rather see Japan revert to the conditions of fifty years ago than see it embrace the religion of Dayton, *et hoc genus omne*. But people who take money on the understanding that they are going to do a given thing should either do that thing or (like Mrs. Buck) resign their positions.

There are many things that go to prove that this point of view is held (though not always quite coherently) by the great body of contributors to American Protestant missions. Among them is the insistence, very noticeable during the last nine months, upon the importance of various tenets, on the

part of officials not generally famous for their doctrinal regularity.

This sudden access of orthodoxy is synchronous with, and has greatly informed, their denunciations of a certain book (*Rethinking Missions, a Laymen's Inquiry After One Hundred Years*) which appeared nearly a year ago. The usual procedure with regard to unpleasant books is to condemn and ignore: but this work, it seems, must be continuously discredited because its authors promise to issue a number of supplementary volumes embodying their "Fact-finders' Reports." (These reports, as regards China, are now out. Those for Japan, where the situation is more scandalous, were promised for last March but are not yet—this is August—to hand.)

They were not hostile to the book when it first appeared, though its doctrinal looseness was its most obtrusive feature, much touted in press notices. What really excites the Mission Board officials is a series of suggestions which, if adopted, would deprive at least four-fifths of them of their *raison d'être*. It is high time that some of them were adopted. So far as doctrinal considerations are involved, it ought to be obvious that there is no obstacle to greatly reducing the number of these officials im-

mediately. The sole difference which led to the severance of Northern and Southern Methodists and Presbyterians was that which concerned the question of slavery: never an issue in Japan and long a dead one here. Methodists unite, in that country, to form a single Japan Methodist Church. Similarly, Presbyterians and Reformed are merged in a single native denomination. The maintenance of six American Methodist Boards and at least four for the Presbyterian-Reformed group looks like what, in municipal politics, is unkindly described as graft. And, so far, we have looked only within particular ecclesiastical systems which have never been separated by doctrinal differences.

There is not now any reason why amalgamations should not go much further. With a few trifling concessions (which need be scarcely more than verbal) to fundamentalists, a merger, similar to that which already exists in the United Church of Canada, could be effected tomorrow if it could be done without greatly diminishing the number of administrative jobs—largely in the hands of “consecrated laymen.” Even the idea of some sort of coöperation with openly non-Christian religions has met with a measure of approval. A manifesto appearing—in *Japan*—in January, 1933, bearing the names of Presbyterian, Baptist, Methodist, Congregationalist, Reformed, and Quaker missionaries, tells us that: “Christianity and the other religions are sufficiently in agreement in their fundamental doctrines about God and man.”

This attitude, which is not widely advertised in American denominational “literature,” is the result of various confluent causes. The older preachers, who came to Japan in the belief that all heathendom, doomed to hell in the next

world, is plunged in moral darkness here, were either quickly disabused of these absurdities and, consequently, in some perplexity as to what their “message” really was: or they hardened themselves by striving to put an evil meaning upon all that they saw and heard. This, with the help of some hard lying, enabled them to retain the support of Protestants at home, who were then, for the most part, fundamentalists. “Buddhism teaches that woman has no soul” used to make a great hit with Ladies’ Aids and similar gatherings. Buddhism, in Japan, draws no such distinction as between the sexes. “There shall be no distinction as regards male or female,” writes the great bonze, Honen, about 1175 A.D.

WITH the turn of the century, slandering Japan became an unprofitable pastime. Even the truth, if unfavorable to Japan, might cause unpleasantness for those who uttered it abroad. Books and magazines in English could now be read by a few: speeches and interviews were sometimes cabled back and printed in the vernacular press. Rival missionaries began “telling on” each other in this connection. Authorities began to learn the gentle art of encouraging those missionaries and those branches of their work that spent the most money (with the least evangelistic success) in Japan and created the most desired impression abroad. They grasped the fact that missionaries from our great democratic Middle West were not averse to wearing decorations bestowed by a non-Christian monarchy. They were minor decorations but just as serviceable for impressing the home folk as would have been the highest honors in the gift of His Imperial Japanese Majesty. I never

heard of a missionary being decorated for strictly evangelistic work. It is the founding of hospitals and schools (with military instruction as part of the curricula and religious instruction excluded) that is thus rewarded. The claim that the decoration of Dr. X or Rev. Y shows how the Government "welcomes our message" is, therefore, wholly misleading.

Missionaries might, if they liked, talk at home of their "successes," since the suggestion that Japan has embraced the religion, along with the armaments, of the West seems, for some localities, to be good propaganda. But this did not leave them quite carefree, for, obviously, once missionaries have succeeded, they are no longer necessary. It was necessary for them to walk, like Agag, delicately.

The fundamentalist mind, though not always averse to lying in a "good" cause, usually lacks the agility demanded by this new situation. So there was a change in the "missionary objective." No longer was the heathen to be given his choice between going to hell and spending eternity with revivalists. Rather, there was to be a sharing of experiences with those who followed the great religions of the East. "He that believeth not shall be damned" gave way to "Come and let us reason together." More recently, I heard of a Japanese who suggested that, since it was the Americans who both prized the slogan and had the money, they should support Buddhist and Shinto missionaries in America as well as Protestants in Japan. If only that suggestion could have been passed back to fundamentalists in America, in the days, say, of William Jennings Bryan! But, of course the obtuse fellow had failed to grasp one of the basic principles of

modernism—that one must never take anything literally.

At home, some of the more advanced ministers were ceasing to rail at Darwin, Huxley and other such miscreants. With, as they thought, some encouragement from Wallace, borrowing timidly from the still suspected *Higher Critics*, and reading such books as *Natural Law in the Spiritual World*, they were reaching out toward the idea that a reconciliation of science and religion could be effected by no one's meaning quite what he said. For some reason, yet to be explained (but cf. St. Luke's Gospel, xiv, 31, 32), they wanted the reconciliation a lot more than the scientists, many of whom were not even aware of the conflict.

Some of the newer missionaries had been drilled in this repertory. They were not held in check and constrained to be tactful, as their colleagues at home were, by the necessity of having to get their livings from fundamentalist flocks: and they had the discreet sympathy of those colleagues as well as that of some of the new officials in the Mission Boards.

These organizations, too, were changing their methods. The relatively simple task of raising funds to save the heathen from hell by teaching them the religion of our more backward districts had been performed, for the most part, by ministers. But inducing fundamentalists to part with cash to be used (without telling them of it) to help missionaries and natives "learn from each other," was a task too subtle for the elderly preachers *in situ*. This gave the consecrated layman his chance to cash in.

Now, he seems to be more the rule than the exception. Often, his salary as corresponding secretary, foreign secre-

tary, executive secretary, or what not (frequent changes in nomenclature seem to be part of the technique) is higher than that of any of his missionaries. Ten thousand dollars might be regarded as a just average estimate when, in addition to salary, there are other perquisites, including frequent and pleasant traveling at home and abroad.

This sort of thing is sometimes defended by dwelling upon the consecrated layman's sacrifices in abandoning his chances of a business career for the "joy of service." Some unconsecrated laymen might be found willing to abandon their business careers for the joy of an assured ten thousand a year. But these people are more spiritual. That, probably, is why it never seems to occur to them that all priests and ministers left lay life, with its chances, and assumed not only the distinctions but also the obligations of their special calling. Yet very few of these command such magnificent solatia.

SUCH, then, was the situation at a little before the turn of the century. Here was a large vested interest, that of American Protestant missions, established with a definite end in view—that of saving the heathen from hell by getting them to embrace "Bible Christianity" and to win them from immorality by getting them to do whatever they did "in the name of the Lord." Many missionaries still clung to this objective but others had been disabused of it and, among newcomers, especially of the better educated Congregationalist, Presbyterian and Reformed missionaries ("Old Terwilliger" was only just beginning to intellectualize the Methodists), there was a marked latitudinarian tendency.

Still, it *was* a vested interest. The problem was how to keep it going while abandoning the "objective" for which it was established—for which people had given and were giving their money. It was a little complicated. Some large donors favored change. Others did not. Most of the money for running expenses, as distinguished from new buildings, etc., was raised not from large donors but from congregations, almost all fundamentalist but, in an increasingly large number of cases, discreetly served by ministers who no longer believed in Jonah and the stricter forms of monogamy.

Generally speaking, two lines of policy were followed. People were told that the message was to remain the same; but that there was to be some change of emphasis. Morals were to be stressed: in lands taught for ages the precepts of Confucius! This was rendered easier by the fact that fundamentalists were, by this time, howling for Prohibition and were glad to know that the same noise was to be dinned in benighted ears abroad.

The other idea was that of laying stress upon the *duty* of giving to missions without bothering about details and, in this, the invention of the duplicate envelope system was a great help. This was an envelope with two pockets, one for local purposes and the other either specifically for the support of missions or for the central denominational organization of which, in most bodies, missions were the main activity. In one such central body, salaries range up to \$15,000 in addition to perquisites and, in some cases, to salaries received in other connections.

The proportion suggested for the duplex envelopes—often supplied by the Mission Board—was that the total

offering should be tithed for outside purposes: but the Board's share might easily be more than a tenth because a nickel is usually the smallest coin given by adults and, thus, a large number of envelopes (fifty-two a year) contained a quarter in the black side and a nickel in the red. The Biblical "silver and gold" furnishing a handy slogan, fifty cents in the black often meant a dime in the red, and so on. A body with a million adult contributors might, thus, expect between two and three million dollars a year, for general purposes, in addition to special gifts and the proceeds of occasional drives for new enterprises. The expense of forwarding the money on the red side was borne locally: so that the Boards got all that was intended for them and the great expense, sometimes bemoaned by missionaries in the field, of getting the money abroad, was incurred at headquarters.

Many Protestants are now so well broken to the idea of giving to missions without taking too much interest in details that there are those who seem to regard the advent of missionary speakers as a sort of penalty inflicted upon those congregations which, by neglecting the red side of the envelope, have "failed to meet their quota."

The complaint, sometimes uttered by sincere missionaries, that all this is a policy of *après moi le déluge* is suppressed by "disciplinary" methods when possible. When the same cry is raised at home, it is argued that, in the near future (the time mentioned since 1905, when I first heard it, and recently, 1933, reiterated by a Board president, is "twenty-five to thirty years"), owing to the progress of the great work, the churches in Japan and China will be self-supporting. As the same lot, generally speaking, has been collecting the

envelopes since 1905, and has now passed middle age, it will be *après moi* for most of them before the date now set for that happy consummation.

As for the great work's progress, a recent study of the 1932 figures, for Japan, of a leading denomination inclines me to the belief that from a fifth to a quarter of the *active* communicants are supported, directly or indirectly, from church funds. A considerable proportion of the others must consist of the grateful relatives and friends of the supported. The dismissal of a native worker or even the refusal of a scholarship in some mission school might easily mean the loss of half a dozen from the active list. There is also a large list of inactive communicants and of non-communicant followers, "carried until they have been transferred or (*are known to*) have died." All of these go to make up the total membership as reported in America.

SOME of the more honest of the older missionaries, seeing that their work was going to be largely undermined by these new ways and that they would be put into the position either of having to disown their former teachings or, continuing in them, having to tolerate, in foreign colleagues, opinions and practices for which they would excommunicate native converts, resigned and went home. Most of them stayed either upon their own account or upon that of their wives. Life, for these women, had been far from unpleasant. Their houses, larger and better appointed than the usual Protestant manse in the Middle West, situated in well kept foreign concessions, were served by four or five servants apiece, all in a country where their husbands' salaries classed them

among the very rich and enabled them to spread the impression that they were numbered among the great of their own land. (This, of course, relates to the turn of the century, when money was still very dear in Japan.) The idea of going back to doing their own housework, living at the mercy of church committees and under the scrutiny of the pious of their own sex, instead of being treated, during their furloughs, as those requiring special comforts after enduring a lustrum of martyrdom in a heathen land, naturally did not appeal to them.

Some of the men had made investments upon which they hoped to realize enough for an easy retirement in early old age. They could not expect to amass the wealth which had come to some of their colleagues in the Sandwich Islands because Japanese law forbade the outright ownership of land by American citizens. But within the foreign concessions, they might hold land upon perpetual lease. The rentals upon these, at first exorbitant and in excess of normal taxation, became, with the cheapening of money, very much less than would have been the taxes from which they were, by treaty, forever exempt. Some of these properties are now worth several hundred times what was originally paid for them. In addition to this, Americans may now own, superficially, residential property in most parts of the country. Ownership of superficies is practically absolute, once buildings have been erected. Villas at fashionable mountain and shore resorts are so owned by a number of missionaries and there has been, at times, a lively trade in such properties. As a consequence, some missionaries in later years found themselves possessed of modest fortunes of from fifty thou-

sand to more than a hundred thousand dollars.

This sort of thing was not, in all cases, morally culpable. It was seldom so among men who went out in the 'Seventies and 'Eighties of the last century. All intelligent people knew that there must be some advance in the price of land: but no one dreamed that it would increase a hundredfold and more. A man can not be blamed if the prudent investment of his savings turns out to have been unexpectedly lucky. But among some of those who came later, after the rise in land was getting less rapid, there has been an expenditure of time and care describable as the running of a side business.

Some of the older men remained honestly. They disciplined their converts in the old ways and dissociated themselves (sometimes by open controversy) from their modernist colleagues. They could not all be sent home to "speak their piece" for, in the then fundamentalist state of the lay mind, this would have embarrassed the Mission Boards in their development of business methods. Fortunately, the revision of treaties which came into effect just before the end of the century, seemed to offer a way out. Americans were now permitted to reside in the interior. So to the interior the irreconcilables might go. They could be as cantankerous as they liked in Bakabakashi village so long as they did not interfere with developments in Tokyo, where their native successors would be trained under more modern auspices. By this time, they are nearly all dead or superannuated.

THOSE of the older men who had seen the light, with the help of newcomers who had the confidence of

the Boards, set out to make all things new. Native and missionary began "learning from one another." The Japanese learned mathematics, English, science, engineering, medicine and enough of the military arts to shorten their time as conscripts and to fit them to become reserve officers. The missionaries acquired a new technique in the art of playing both ends against the middle. They set up great schools and colleges, with comfortable and, sometimes, ostentatiously luxurious quarters for themselves, getting the Government to license them on the strict understanding that religion should be excluded from their curricula: while representing them to their American constituencies as efficient vehicles for the spread of their tenets. They learned to erect other institutions upon somewhat similar terms.

Had Japan been a backward country, without schools or hospitals, as China was, or as some parts of Africa are, such institutions could have been made a powerful evangelistic agency, since they could have imparted secular instruction upon their own terms. Japan, though not backward, was relatively poor and, though bent upon the acquirement of modern secular knowledge, was expending a large proportion of the national budget upon armaments. The authorities were, therefore, glad to be relieved of a part of the burden of education and medicine by the expenditure, in these departments, of mission money. It is tremendously significant that they did not feel themselves in a position to accept this relief from institutions which included religion in their curricula. Taking their point of view, one can scarcely accuse them of moral turpitude. They never compelled the missionaries to maintain the institutions: and the eagerness of the latter to do so,

under the conditions laid down, may easily have astonished them.

This diversion of funds and energy from evangelistic to institutional work had several consequences. I mention two: (1) Money was now often handled in lump sums which, even if subject to some attrition *en route*, were still impressive in the amounts actually expended upon the objects for which they were given. (2) The number of "lay missionaries," at first regarded as auxiliary to the preachers, gradually increased until, now, it is much the larger. This was due, in part, to the supposed necessity for teachers in the schools and for doctors and nurses in the hospitals. It was also a consequence of the rise of the consecrated laymen to positions of influence in the home boards. These had often rubbed ministers the wrong way and had, in return, been frequently piqued by them. Not content with serving tables, they had intruded upon the ministry of the word. They devoted a certain amount of time to pleasant tours of inspection in foreign parts: some more time to delivering inspirational talks in America about the joy of service and the delights of "giving till it hurts." (When "Give till it hurts" showed signs of wear, it gave place to "Give till it stops hurting.") They even occupied the rostra at conferences of ministers and seminary students with a view to peppering them up and teaching them practical common sense. Generally they used the language of big business, in a holy way, until the War. Then they began talking about strategy, objectives, home and field bases. They regarded the missionaries as the "army in the field," themselves as the supreme command at home. When it seemed as if they were about to get all the money they asked for in any one connection,

they said it looked as though they were going over the top.

The great earthquake of 1923 came as a godsend. At first glance, it may not look much like practical common sense that this catastrophe found them, in an earthquake country, uninsured against earthquakes. But perhaps it was. "Let us," they cried, "rise up and build." (Nehemiah ii, 18.) The amounts expended upon rebuilding were considerably in excess of the value of the properties destroyed (which need not, by itself, have been culpable): and, of course there was the overhead. The use of the expression *overhead* is one of the consecrated layman's most efficient contributions toward the practical financing of missions.

The idea that he was just as good at holiness and exhortation as any minister and was possessed, in addition, of a monopoly of practical common sense, tended to give the consecrated layman a low view of the ministerial commission. He resented anything like clericalism upon the part of those who bore it and sought to reproduce his own kind in the mission field. Sometimes, too, he had protégées—his own and those of supporters—to take care of.

THE comments of the *Laymen's Inquiry* upon all this strike me as being very mild. What they have so far published with regard to Japan seems to err on the side of understatement. They gently suggest that too many people are employed in the financial administration of missions: in particular that there are too many field treasurers. They could have said a great deal more upon that point without sighting the limits of truth. Their recommendations, if adopted, would wipe out at least a dozen lay jobs in Japan alone, not to mention

the home base and other lands in heathen darkness lying: but they are just enough impracticable in detail, and take just enough color from doctrinal objectives, to make it possible for officials (whose own doctrinal regularity is not their strong point) to draw a whole school of red herring across their own path. For it is quite obvious, to any one acquainted with the situation, that the laymen are, at times, a little lacking in practical common sense.

But, taking the point of view that the conversion of Japan to American Protestantism is a thing to be desired, it strikes me that the following suggestions ought to seem constructive and practicable.

(1) Let all bodies now constituents of the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America follow the example already set by the United Church of Canada, and join to set up a single Department of Missions for that organization. Since they subscribe to its formulæ and recognize each other's ministries, and since it has been done in Canada by a body with which they are in full communion, this ought, surely, to seem possible. The staff of such a Department need not be more than half again as large as that of any of the larger Boards which it would absorb. Home overhead would be enormously reduced and many a consecrated layman could return, with conscience clear, to making his fortune in the business world.

(2) Retire all field treasurers save one in each country. Retire, also, every layman engaged upon work which could be done, for less money, by a native: granting liberal pensions to those over fifty and to any beneath that age who, in consequence of their missionary service, have been rendered incapable of earning a living at home.

This should result in a great and progressive reduction in the salary-pension budget. If the foregoing and next following suggestion were adopted, this budget might easily be halved at once.

(3) Pay no salaries to missionaries whose private incomes are greater than the stipulated salary: or to any missionary possessing property with a readily convertible value of more than one hundred thousand dollars. Do not augment smaller private incomes to amounts in excess of stipulated salaries. Mercenaries can not make good missionaries.

(4) Stick to the prediction that the "native churches" in Japan and China will be self-supporting (or, alterna-

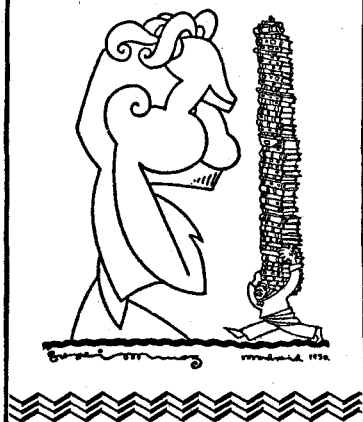
tively, that missions will have failed) in thirty years and, in the light of this belief, arrange to wind up the whole business in A.D. 1964. With this end in view: (a) appoint no more young missionaries. There are some now in the field who will not have reached the age of retirement in 1964. (Besides, the appointment of missionaries from a later generation might result in another change of objective and so hold up the programme.) With this measure adopted, death and superannuation will effect a progressive reduction of personnel. (b) Reduce, inexorably, all other budgets by three and one third per cent *per annum* of the amounts provided in the year 1934.



THE LITERARY LANDSCAPE

by

HERSCHEL BRICKELL



THOSE readers who have followed the wanderings of the Landscaper up and down the earth know already his deep interest in Spain and in everything that goes on in the Iberian Peninsula. Kept away from the country by force of circumstances since just before the Revolution, he writes this number of the department looking out across a wide stretch of the blue Bay of Biscay, with the agreeable thunders of the surf on the principal beach at Santander as an accompaniment to the thoughts that have been collected from far travels in the Peninsula and talks with all sorts of people. It is incredibly peaceful here, with an International University going full blast in the Palace of the Magdalena, once enjoyed by Alfonso XIII, and now filled with students from many countries, and the exciting political news in the papers every day has a strangely remote air, as if the possibility of a change in government—even a Socialist dictatorship—could have no effect whatever upon the life of this haven of rest and pleasant people.

But Life Goes On

EVERY day life in Spain has always had a way of going on undisturbed by changes in government, even by such

radical changes as have taken place here since the Monarchy was deposed. The ancient Spanish cynicism about governments, expressed in the prayer: "God protect the present government, because the next one would be worse," offers a kind of insulation against political upheavals, and amid

the peace and beauty of this place one recalls the remarks of a Catalán in Barcelona, who answered a few words of praise of his city and province with the statement that everything in Spain was all right except the government, and that his native Catalonia, which used to have one bad government, now had two. This was a reference, of course, to the autonomous state set up after the coming of the Republic. A taxicab driver in Madrid expressed his feelings by saying that things were much better under the Monarchy, for, he declared, there was more work to be had, and far more liberty. "Now, *señor*, one can not move a foot without stumbling over a policeman." A distinguished musician said to the Landscaper that no one in the Peninsula was satisfied with the existing state of affairs, and that the Cortes was able to do nothing, because of the ineffectiveness of the intellectual leaders and the selfishness of the radical elements.