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THE CHRISTIAN MESSAGE FOR TODAY

Young people and adults of every land are asking today: Why send Christian missionaries abroad? Has Christianity any vital message to take to China in her hour of tragic need? Has Christ the same or a different message for Japan and Korea in this time of crisis? Have Christians a vital message for Turkey and Spain, for Germany and Russia, for Italy and Abyssinia; for Latin America and the United States? The question calls for a clear answer—one that will satisfy and that checks with facts.

Two years ago China, for example, was turning more and more to Christ. Many of the National leaders had become Christians; Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek and his wife had clearly demonstrated their Christian faith; and then the blow fell and a destructive war was forced on them by a militant neighbor and threatened the very life of the nation. The lives of Christians are sacrificed or endangered and God's work is hindered. Not only so but the so-called Christian nations have stood by without taking effective measures to help China. Righteousness does not seem to have exalted any nation—at least in recent years.

Let us remember that the Christian message does not offer any guarantee of material comfort and prosperity. Christ never promised His followers immunity from physical hardships. In fact, His Church was founded on sacrifice and some of its earliest promoters were martyrs. Never has suffering been separated from progress either in the Church or the State, in individuals or in nations; and today is no exception. It is no sign that Christ has failed, because His people suffer—even unto death.

Christian people in every land are strengthened rather than weakened by suffering. In China, there are thousands who suffer triumphantly and thousands more who show the love of

Christ by ministering to others who suffer. Professor Pardee Lowe, a Chinese Christian, says:

Chinese Christians still believe that the Church has a message for China today. They hope that the Christians in America will yet rise to the measure of their responsibilities as representatives of Christ, and will not sanction evil practices for selfish purposes.

But whether or not American and British Christians fail, Christ will not fail. The message of Christ to China must be distinguished from the message of Christendom, or of so-called Christian nations, of the organized Church, or of individual Christians; the message of Christ today and always is the same for China, for Japan, for Germany and for America. It is the message of the love of God as revealed in Christ; the message of forgiveness and God's promise of life and peace to those who accept Christ and His atonement for sin; the message of guidance and power promised to those who seek to do the will of God; the message of Eternal Life as the gift of God through Christ.

If temporal comfort and prosperity were to be considered an evidence of the truth of Christ and His message, the Church would never have survived the first century. "The things that are seen are temporal" and often disappointing; "the things that are unseen are eternal"—and they are not obtained by force of arms or purchased with money. But the fact that Christ's spiritual and eternal benefits are of greatest value to Christians is no reason why any of us should look on complacently while others suffer. The Spirit of Christ must lead each of His followers to suffer with those who are poor or sick or persecuted, and to render all the help possible without counting the cost to one's self. The Christian message is one of God's justice and truth and love and the result is to be experienced in this life as well as in the Life beyond the Veil. Here is a message for

of eleven. He was of humble parentage and has gone on from strength to strength; now wherever a Christian community feels its need for revival, whether it be in Egypt or Palestine or Syria, it is this Moslem convert (formerly a schoolboy in a Mission school) whose help is enlisted. Not only does he see many conversions in his missions but he leads his converts on to that absolute surrender which is essential for a holy and radiant Christian life.

Among the women, though this field is considerably more restricted on account of Moslem prejudice, there is the daughter of a Moslem farmer, converted in a Mission school at an early age. Her messages are of great power and are wonderfully used of God; more outstanding, however, is the beauty of her holy life.

Sheikh Mikhail Mansour used to be a professor in the great Moslem University of Al-Azhar. Sheikh Kamel Mansour has taken up the work which his brother laid down and has greatly extended it. He preaches two or sometimes three times a week to large gatherings of Moslems of the more intelligent classes. He is the friend of all Moslem converts and in all their difficulties they turn to him. As a special preacher to Chris-

tian communities he is much in demand and leads a bright and happy Christian life, which is even more effective than his excellent sermons.

These are outstanding cases, like David's three mighty men. But David had many more than three mighty men whose deeds were also worth recording; and there are many others in Moslem lands whose names might be mentioned, men and women, girls and boys who, because of their faith, have suffered greatly and who out of weakness were made strong.

"Lift up your eyes and look on the fields." Do not provoke God to anger by saying "Can God"? (Psalm 78). Though we may receive encouragements to our faith as we look on the fields, the needful faith will only come as the light shineth in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. When we truly behold Him, obedience becomes natural and though like Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel we are called to an apparently unfruitful ministry, we will not turn aside from the call but, being truly convinced that God's Word "will not return unto Him void but shall accomplish that which He pleases," we will encourage ourselves in the Lord, as David did in his blackest hour.

Sauntering in an African Market

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OUR English word "saunter" is derived from two French words, "Sante Terre," which means *Holy Land*. Crusaders on their way to Palestine were called "Sante-terrers" or Saunterers. We, too, may make of every "saunter" a real pilgrimage. If our eyes, ears and hearts are open to God's messages of color, sound and sight, each walk that we take can lead us straight to the Holy Land of God's Presence. I took such a walk recently through an African market, perhaps the least likely place on earth to find God or to feel His nearness. *In the midst of a babel of barter and a turmoil of trade I met Him.*

Winds whispering through tips of tall trees; ants rustling beneath dry brush; the running water of a near-by stream; tiny birds of tropical plumage chattering on palm fronds in gleeful anticipation of a fat feast of tid-bits left untidily on market soil; lean dogs slinking stealthily after

their masters; chickens fluttering, sheep pulling at their tether; the wails of baby blacks and baby goats blending harmoniously; earthen jars jostling jovially together; crackling fires beneath black pots; the indistinguishable murmur of hundreds of voices, like mutterings of thunder growing louder and louder until one recognizes the laughter of children, the gossip of women, and the angry voice of traders. *I heard His voice above the sounds of an African market!*

The smell of burned grass; of warm earth soaked and steaming after rain; of dried roots and herbs; of fresh fruits and newly dug nuts; of palm oil and strong soap; of unworn cloth and pipe smoke; of poultry and live stock; of "ripe" meat kept too long; of sweaty bodies close together. *Amidst the odors of an African market I discerned His incense.*

Blue sky, blue hills, noon shadows; green grass,

green palms, golden fruit; brown herbs, grey smoke, bright beads; purple, orange and crimson turbans bobbing restlessly to and fro; Joseph's coat of many colors gracefully draped the lithe black bodies of the more fortunate ones. *I saw the pictures that He painted on market rows!*

He was there among the "greens" where native roots and indigenous vegetables were displayed. He walked among the seeded corn, millet and cassava flour as surely as He had walked among the wheat fields. Where handfuls of coarse salt were bargained for and squabbled over, I heard these words: "Ye are the salt of the earth, but if the salt have lost its savor wherewith shall it be salted?" I stopped among the clay pots and water jugs of various shapes and sizes for campfire cooking and hasty visits to the spring. I had watched them in the village as they shaped and molded, ready for this market day. "Mould me and make me after Thy Will, while I am waiting, yielded and still."

In the meat market one's nose is held and one's appetite is lost. Ripe meat displayed in tempting arrays; strings of fish blackened in the sun; hippo meat, the older, the better; shriveled rats; juicy caterpillars; fat frog legs; skinny crabs; fried ants; cat and dog steak; luscious locusts; goat carved "in toto," the skin and internal workings being preferred. This is man's depraved taste, for which he will spend his last hard-earned cent, unwilling to hear the Voice whispering: "He that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat; yea, come buy wine and milk without money and without price."

In our saunter through this African market we see a group of men squatting on the ground around a huge gourd filled with native tobacco. One suck of this community pipe costs one-tenth of a cent. It is passed from one buyer to another, around the circle and back again until the smokers become drugged with its fumes and often fall into the fire and are fearfully burned. Woe to that man who steals one breath of smoke without paying the price. Another group of men are drinking corn beer or palm wine. Their laughter becomes louder and their voices so rasping we can hardly hear these words: "And the merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn: the merchandise of purple and scarlet and wood, vessels of ivory and of brass and iron; odours and ointments, wine and oil and fine flour, beasts and sheep and slaves and souls of men."

Bundles of fuel, fresh cut from the forests are lying at the feet of tired woodmen. It is friendly wood, ready to kindle flickering fires on mud thresholds to cook warm mush for hungry mud mouths or to light a torch in the darkness to reveal the narrow trail. Every bush may be a

burning bush to us. "Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground."

"Into the woods my Master went, clean forespent, forespent.

Out of the woods my Master came, content with death and shame."

Cheap European cloth in rainbow colors and menagerie design, glass earrings and beads; safety pins for stringing around the neck or slipping in the ear lobes; needles, thread and buttons; bright tin cups and saucers, cheap cigarettes are all displayed at Vanity Fair and show the detrimental presence of the white trader, who is teaching the simple African to lay up for himself treasures on earth where rust and *white ants* break through and steal. "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world." At an African trading center *I listened to the sermons that He preached.*

Shiny ebony bodies with shredded rags around their loins; a skeleton child, gaunt and weak, gazing hungrily about; laden women carrying huge baskets; black madonnas nursing their babies; expectant mothers; wrinkled hags bent and warped from years of slavery and drudgery; witch doctors adorned with charms and medicines to keep away the evil spirits; "red women" greased with crimson palm oil and hair daubed with cakes of red clay, a sign of child birth; red-capped soldiers, strong and straight; a trader, nodding over his wares, a victim of sleeping sickness; a leper here and there. This is the personnel of an African market. *I felt His heart throbs in this throng.*

"When He saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd. Then saith He unto His disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous but the laborers are few; pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest that He will send forth labourers into His harvest." My sauntering had brought me to the Holy Land. *This is the lesson that God had for me there!*

The reign of death is broken;
The reign of Life begun,
For God to us has spoken,
In the person of His Son.
His coming was the token
Of God's love for our race,
And we behold His glory
In boundless truth and grace.

* * *

There is no condemnation
For those whom Jesus frees;
He is the consummation
Of all God's promises.

T. R. GLOVER.