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Special Number

Giving information about the Presbyterian Church in the United States.

Articles written by leaders of that denomination.

Southern and United Presbyterian Churches on Foreign Fields

BY CHARLES HADDON NABERS, D.D.,
First Presbyterian Church, Pensacola, Fla.

AS a member of the General Assembly's Committee of the Southern Presbyterian Church on closer relations with the United Presbyterian Church, I have been asked to interpret the mind of the committee of the Church at large as far as foreign mission work of the two denominations is concerned.

The articles which have been appearing in the Church papers from members of the committee are in no sense of the word propaganda. No member of the committee has any conscious desire to sway the opinion of the Church leaders. We merely desire to give the Church the result of our study and to make clear to others our own thinking on the subject of closer relationship with the United Presbyterian Church.

The United Presbyterian Church maintains strong, effective, and what is regarded by Christian statesmen model, missions in Egypt, India, the Soudan, and Abyssinia. The Southern Presbyterian Church carries on mission work in six countries—China, Japan, Korea, Brazil, Mexico, and the African Congo.

In loyalty to the great commission, in sacrificial giving for the extension of the kingdom of Christ in other lands, in type of men and women sent out to witness for the Master, and in the thoroughness and efficiency of the organizations maintained upon the foreign field, there is a close kinship between the United Presbyterian Church and the Southern Presbyterian Church. The Southern Presbyterian Church has given more per capita for benevolences than any great denomination in America except the United Presbyterian Church. For many years the United Presbyterian Church has led all other denominations in per capita gifts for foreign mission. We have usually followed along in second place.

So far as the foreign mission field is concerned, what would the Southern Presbyterian Church gain by union with the United Presbyterian Church?

In the first place we would have what many people in our denomination have long desired—we would have mission work in India. Every minister in the Southern Presbyterian Church is regularly asked by some member of his congregation why the Southern Presbyterian Church has no work in the great land of India, where practically every other denomination has its mission work, but where at the present time no allotment of territory has been given to us.

The second thing we would gain is this: work among the Mohammedans. All of us are frequently asked why the Southern Presbyterian Church has no vital touch with the force of Islam, the last of the great religions to secure converts in the world; the only one of the great religions which, in great areas of Africa, is gaining pagan populations today, and the only religion which claims today as its own parts of three continents which once were Christian.

In Egypt the United Presbyterian Church has been working for over half a century with marvelous results. There is in that land today a Christian constituency of more than 50,000 souls, whose influence in the nation is far greater than their proportion to the population of the country. The graduates of Assiut College have become teachers and professors, men whose influence is felt increasingly in all parts of Egyptian life. The educational system of the United Presbyterian mission in Egypt has been used as a model for many missions of other denominations of other lands. The capstone of the system is Assiut College for professional training and the theological seminary at Cairo, where native ministers are given a theological education not to be unfavorably compared with that in our seminaries in America.

Another gain, not insignificant in my own mind, is to be found in this fact—the mission in Egypt of the United Presbyterian Church is right on the direct line of tourist travel. There are 10,000 visitors each year to this land from America

to one visitor in those lands where we, at the present time, maintain mission stations. Union with the United Presbyterian Church would give us joint ownership of a splendid mission work at a place where many of our people go every year in their regular European and Mediterranean travels, and where, after seeing mission work at first hand, their interest and enthusiasm could be capitalized in our own denomination.

What would the United Presbyterian Church gain by union with us?

We would bring to them an interest in foreign mission work in the Far East. Their vision, would, of necessity, become broader as they saw their dollars and daughters carrying the gospel to China, Korea, and Japan. Where they would give us a part in carrying Christianity to the great civilized land of Egypt in the Near East, we would give them a share in taking Christ to the great civilized nation of Japan in the Far East. Where they shared with us an interest in the great nation of India, we would share with them an interest in China.

Another thing which would accrue to the United Presbyterian Church would be interest in Latin America mission work. As we have frequently been compelled to answer questions as to why we have no mission work among the Moslems, they have, in the United Presbyterian denomination, been asked the same question in regard to Latin America. We would bring to them an interest in the unreached millions of the western world.

What would be the gain to the united Church if, in the course of years, it was seen wise to prepare for the two denominations to become one?

The membership of the new Church would feel the call of the whole world, for the combined missions of the denominations would reach practically every unchristianized portion of the earth. For the spiritual leaders in the Church there would be an enlarged vision and deeper prayer life, for when one prays for all the interest of his Church his individual soul is enlarged and his daily life rendered more gloriously true to the teachings of his Master. Enlarged vision is, in the Church of the living God, an asset of no mean worth. With enlarged vision there would come more sacrificial giving, not alone of money, but of interest and personality.

Wonderfully fine people are the foreign mission workers in the United Presbyterian Church! During the years when I taught in a mission school of the United Presbyterian Church at Cairo, I became intimately acquainted with the entire force in that nation, and I also knew, with a more than casual acquaintance, all the workers in the Sudan mission, who came up the Nile to spend their furloughs in the less trying climate of Egypt. Seeing these loyal, bighearted men and women hard at work at the greatest task given the modern Church, and carrying Christ to the followers of the Arabian prophet, I grew to know and to love these missionaries. They are men and women of heroic mold, of deepest consecration, of sane and aggressive orthodoxy, of unbounding energy, and of complete self-sacrificing service. No denomination is more careful in demanding the highest physical, mental, and spiritual standard for its missionaries.

In both spirit and temperament they are just our sort of folks. In those days I was a Southern boy making his first trip beyond the Mason and Dixon line; but the mere accident of geographical differences was never thought of, except, perhaps, as my peculiar Carolina intonation of the English language furnished a bit of amusement to those of the North. I know that our own workers and the workers of the United Presbyterian Church can labor side by side in harmony and brotherly love, without friction, on the foreign mission field, for I have been there, and know from personal experience whereof I am speaking.