

# EVANGELISTIC AND PASTORAL RESPONSIBILITIES :

## THE CHURCH'S WORK OVERSEAS.

BY THE REV. S. GARRETT, M.A., Home Secretary, Church Missionary Society.

**T**HE moral responsibility of a man is limited by his power to discharge it. A man is not blamed who, having prepared with all possible earnestness to meet a certain responsibility, finds when the decisive day arrives that unforeseen circumstances have arisen which render failure inevitable. Under such conditions a noble failure may be the grandest form of success. Praise instead of blame, however, can only be given where the earnestness of preparation and noble determination to win success have been displayed beyond doubt.

What is true of the individual is equally true of the group, the nation, the institution, or the church. A despairing effort to meet a situation which should have been foreseen but was not prepared for may be spectacular but is pathetic rather than inspiring.

As we face the evangelistic and pastoral responsibility of the Church overseas we are compelled to ask: Did the Church look forward to and prepare for the present situation as earnestly as she might have done? Is the Church to-day watching the situation which is developing before her eyes and earnestly preparing for the responsibilities which are inevitably coming upon her?

One of the most hopeful indications of new life in the Church to-day is the remarkable development of a very widespread interest in world evangelism. Many causes have been working to quicken this interest. Amongst others are the increasing knowledge of the world and of the world's peoples, the growing recognition of the similarity and interrelation of national problems, the great improvement in the literary presentation of the aims and results of missionary effort, and, last but not least, the carefully-thought-out programme for the education of the Home Base which prepared the way for the launching of the World Call.

The interest has been quickened, but it has not yet developed far enough to produce such results as will justify a conviction that the Church will respond to the Call adequately. The response in prayer and gifts may be made by young and old alike. The response in personal service must be to a very large extent the response of youth. The rising generation will only respond if its members are convinced that the Church has a sufficiently great vision of the issues at stake to justify the reckless dedication of life which is necessarily involved.

In order to see some of the greater issues we are compelled to consider first the changed conditions of the world's life and the causes of the change. We see:

1. The life of Africa revolutionized by the activities of traveller, trader, settler, and prospector. Her simple peoples bewildered by the new life which surges around them, grasping at new possibilities suddenly brought within their reach, but not knowing how to use and to benefit by them when grasped.

2. The Moslem World reeling under blow after blow struck from without politically, and from within intellectually. Its confidence in its own social and spiritual superiority shaken to the foundations, it is willing for the first time in thirteen centuries to consider whether those foundations were well and truly laid.

3. The soul of cultured India is restless under a new sense of spiritual hunger. The heart of outcaste India is demanding freedom and friendship, and is finding both in the Christian Church.

4. In the Far East, China is seen staggering on, in spite of chaos and upheaval, towards a destiny which her little band of cultured leaders believe to be as great as her past achievements: Japan, successful, but aghast at the moral and spiritual cost of success, displays new signs of willingness to consider the Christian message.

If the Church of Christ can regain and hold fast the conviction that her message is the one and only solution of the vast human problems which underlie this world-wide restlessness, if she will resolutely set herself to their solution, she will not lack men and women ready to face the evangelistic and pastoral responsibilities involved. Unity of purpose and of action, without slavish uniformity of thought and expression, will be one of the greatest blessings which will result from such effort.

We turn then to the responsibilities. How have they arisen? What is their extent?

We take the situation in Equatorial Africa as an illustration, as time and space will not permit of a wider survey. Our responsibility in Africa has always been unlimited, but until the beginning of the nineteenth century the difficulties in the way of discharging it was so great that little could be done. We might almost say that little could be expected. It is true that members of our race left their mark on Africa—the mark was a scar—but the carrying out of a hasty slave raid was a very different thing from the patient effort involved in a missionary campaign. That the physical difficulties could be sufficiently overcome for the one was not proof that they could be so overcome as to make the other possible. As these difficulties began to break down a commencement was made by groups within the Church to meet the responsibility in Africa. The difficulties were still, humanly speaking, overwhelming, but, by the grace of God, the work was not overwhelmed. On the West Coast of Africa, in spite of the cost in human life and the frequent setbacks due to the outbreak of persecution, the progress of the Christian Church has been remarkable. A statement of the total number of baptized Christians on the West Coast would not indicate the real power of the Christward movement there. Growth is the only true indication. Each year in Nigeria alone 8,000 adults are being admitted into the Church by baptism.

Archdeacon McKay of the Diocese of Lagos writes as follows of the change which has come over a single town in his Archdeaconry : " A striking change has come over Owo, a town of some 20,000 people, during the last fifteen years. I remember it when Christianity was represented by one blind man : to-day there is not a compound in the town where Christianity is not represented. Last year they opened a fine large church, built by the voluntary efforts of the Christian community. On New Year's Day there was a congregation of over 2,000 people inside and around the church and the Thankofferings amounted to £30. There are two other churches in the place, and a good site has been secured just off the main road of the town for another church and school."

Bishop Lasbrey reports that all the churches in the Niger Diocese are now self-supporting, and also all the schools, except for the stipends of a few foreign missionaries. The African Church supports in addition about 2,000 African workers of all grades, and contributes £1,400 to the work of the training colleges. The diocesan contributions to outside objects during the last year amounted to £740, including a gift of £606 to the C.M.S. General Fund. Education is spreading in all directions but is outstripped by the demand for education. In spite of self-support and generous assistance from Government funds, the Church cannot meet the demands being made upon her, for the work of the pastor must follow close behind the work of the educationist. Little groups of Christians tend to grow up rapidly around each new reader, and the mass movement towards Christianity may break out unexpectedly in any place within reach of the influence of a Christian school. The demand for pastoral care which such a movement makes upon the African Church is greater than so young a Church can possibly meet. The task of consolidating and guiding the Christian movement in Western Equatorial Africa must be met to a large extent by missionary societies working from overseas. The task of the foreign missionary is becoming more and more that of a trainer of African leaders for this work of consolidation. This does not, however, involve the reduction of the responsibility, but rather its increase both in extent and in quality as the spiritual movement spreads.

On the eastern side of Equatorial Africa similar development of responsibility has taken place. Fifty years ago the first little trickle of converts began to come in. To-day the Uganda Church numbers 186,000 souls, and converts still pour in at the rate of some 18,000 per year. Fifty years ago the first roughly printed sheets of the Gospel story were being issued. In one Province of Uganda alone 15,000 copies of the Four Gospels were recently sold during eighteen months. The British Government was then passively permissive. It is now actively helpful. The Uganda Native Government, then actively hostile, to-day is whole-heartedly friendly.

This new appreciation is gloriously encouraging, but it must be remembered that it is appreciation of good work well done and must be withdrawn, and will rightly be withdrawn, unless the work well done is also well followed up. The edification of a people must

follow on its evangelization if the full benefit of the Christian life is to be received. The inspiration of this work of building up the newly won African people in the Christian life must remain the task of the missionary from overseas. The fulfilment of this task will throw a steadily increasing burden upon the missionary societies for many years to come, and through them will test the reality of the faith of the whole Church.

We have taken our illustrations from the situation in Africa. They might have been drawn with equal ease from India, or the Far East. Other signs appear in the Moslem World which are indications of great possibilities.

Granted a great vision of a great task, the younger members of our Church will not fail to respond to the call to face, in the power of God, the responsibilities involved in the spiritual, social and moral uplift of a world suddenly thrown open before them.

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New editions have been issued of some well-known books on the art of speaking and preaching. Dr. Harold Ford's two books : *The Art of Extempore Speaking*, or How to attain Fluency of Speech, and *The Art of Preaching* have reached respectively their thirteenth and fifth editions and are now issued in revised and enlarged form. Although they are not large books they contain a quantity of sound and practical advice. *The Art of Extempore Speaking* (Herbert Jenkins, Ltd., 3s. 6d. net) shows how to cultivate the faculty of expression side by side with the faculty of thought. *The Art of Preaching* (2s. 6d. net) gives some eminently practical suggestions to young preachers which will save them from many of the errors of their predecessors. These books have been for a long time before the public and their value has been tested, as is shown by the number of editions through which they have passed.

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*Effective Speaking and Writing*, by John Darlington, D.D., Vicar of St. Mark's, Kennington (H. R. Allenson, Ltd., 3s. 6d. net), is of quite a different character. It is practically an abstract of Campbell's *Philosophy of Rhetoric*. This new edition is issued in response to repeated requests. It deals with the laws of thought and their correct expression. It was originally a work of the late eighteenth century, and bears evidence of the thoroughness of its author and the serious attention which was given to the preparation of orations in that age. In these days we fear less attention is given to these matters, but it might be well if such a book as this were studied by some who value the flow of words more than accuracy of thinking in their utterances.