

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

PayPal

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *Review & Expositor* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_rande_01.php

THE HOME BASE.

By J. F. LOVE, D.D., RICHMOND, VA.

The home base of foreign missions is constituted of the individual Christians, the churches, the Christian organizations, the material resources and the spiritual assets of our home Christianity which can be depended on for the projection of the missionary enterprise to the uttermost parts of the earth. The base is strong or weak in proportion to the reliability of these elements in the Christianity of the home land for the purposes of this enterprise. The home task of the foreign mission agencies is to strengthen the home base by increasing the dependableness of these elements. It is the necessary expenditure of effort and money upon this part of the foreign mission task that largely makes up the apparent showing of extravagance in foreign mission administration. The actual expenses of the purely foreign mission work is a comparatively small part of the foreign board's expenditure of either effort or money. The larger expense of administration is that which is necessary in order to create and keep up a reliable home base. If evangelical Christianity's present resources were immediately available, we could probably under present world conditions, and in the face of the opportunity now presented in the mission fields, in one generation duplicate on the foreign field the total church membership of the home churches without increasing the cost of administration. We would thus have constituted a double base from which the advancing lines of missionary conquest could converge on the diminishing heathenism and soon take our positions for the final siege. Christianity's holdings here ought to represent the strength of its foreign mission base. But, alas! such is not the case. Almost one-half of our churches give nothing even of material support to this enterprise; one-half of the members of those churches which

report contributions give nothing; and probably one-half of those members who give do not give half as much as they ought to give for a cause so commanding as foreign missions. The Home Base Commission of the Edinburgh Conference, after canvassing a mass of data, records this conclusion: "It is probably well within the truth to say that nine-tenths of the funds raised in the United States for foreign missions are contributed by one-tenth of the members of the Protestant bodies, the remaining nine-tenths of the members giving the other tenth. This statement is accepted as true by several of the leading denominations." With such defects in the home base threatening the success of the whole enterprise, there is no higher order of missionary service or campaign strategy than this of more thoroughly constituting this base. This work has its difficulties no less formidable than those which confront us on the foreign field, and to overcome them, labor, money, courage and patience will be required. Who among us has surveyed the vast areas of our American Christianity which are yet uncultivated and fruitless? Millions are today starving for the Bread of Life, while vast and productive sections of the home field yield not a loaf to stay their consuming hunger. Many strong churches and more capable individuals stretch forth no hand of relief. Our churches represent potential missionary resources which are undeveloped while missionary triumphs are shortened for the lack of adequate supplies. To render this fertile field fruitful of foreign mission resources demands an order of work which is hard and expensive. It is of the nature of digging the stumps and ditches and of long and faithful cultivation of the soil before the harvest can be realized. Many roots of prejudice must be cast out, some natures must be plowed deep, the mellowing, softening showers of grace must be invoked and the fertilizing methods of New Testament teaching and missionary instruction must be used. What a task! and yet how abundantly

worth while! It is as important to the foreign mission enterprise to make a reliable home base as it is to press the campaign itself. It would be a waste and cause hurtful reaction to put all the effort in the campaign abroad and neglect the matter of strengthening sentiment, enlisting support and assembling resources at home. Undeveloped and stingy church members are the cause of greater ineconomy than all the alleged extravagance of mission boards.

I.

It will strengthen our purpose to take care of this home base if we catalogue some of the elements which when enlisted and impassioned will constitute in America the strongest home base evangelical Christianity has to support its campaign for world conquest.

1. We have a potential racial element in our American home base. The Anglo-Saxon man is constitutionally aggressive, pioneering, adventurous. He experiments, invents, discovers, colonizes, civilizes, educates. He has set forward the frontiers of commerce, material comfort, moral reform and social order in a manner which distinguishes and immortalizes him. Add to the Anglo-Saxon nature the experience, the heightening of power, the vision and the propulsion of evangelical Christian faith, and then arouse in him a normal missionary passion, and his spiritual ventures will know no bounds, and he will have no rivals. The American is the freest, the boldest, the most daring type of the Anglo-Saxon. When evangelical faith is fully purified and missionary zeal is fully aroused among American Christians, they will constitute such a human base for the missionary enterprise as it has never had in any land or age.

2. We have here the possibility of such a material base as evangelical Christianity has never had, and cannot probably have in any other land from which this Christianity is projected. The *per capita* wealth and the *per capita* wage of the evangelical church-member in

America is unequaled by those of the devotee of any religion outside of America. If we could witness an increase of material resources for the missionary enterprise commensurate with the accumulation of American fortunes, we could finance the enterprise as easily as we build railroads, and on a scale of equal magnitude. We have marvelous possibilities for a great home base in the wealth of our land, and we are challenged by missionary opportunity and need to make our Christian men of wealth see that this enterprise has the first and the largest claim upon their benevolences, because missions is the fundamental and productive Christian enterprise. Millions put into libraries, museums, art galleries and the like for the advancement of civilization is like spraying the fruit compared with the horticultural work of producing it. Books and art and other æsthetic agencies are themselves the products of Christianity, and the man who would give his fellowmen the benefits of these can do it in larger measure by giving them the gospel. The nations to whom we give the gospel will get and produce their own arts. Our larger gifts, therefore, should go to this primary and productive work. More and more churches and Christian leaders should seek to command for this cause the unequaled wealth of American Christians. We have scarcely tapped the possible resources already in the hands of American Christians.

3. We have in our American church membership the material for a great numerical base. There are 25,000,000 church members in the United States, or one in four of the whole population including men, women, children and babies. What an army to support and conduct our Christian campaign if only all were as their profession implies really under orders. If the foreign mission enterprise has reached its present proportions with such fractional support as it has received, what are the possibilities for it if these millions of church members with all they possess and command could be relied upon. Professor Thomas

C. Johnson has said truly, "In ordering the constitution of the church God made a missionary society; every member of the church by virtue of his church membership is a member of this missionary society and stands pledged to do his utmost as such. The obligation therefore to fulfill this pledge is imperative and inclusive." The anti-missionary or the o-missionary individual who defends church sovereignty is a missionary heretic after the last commandment. The only serious indictment that can be brought against orthodoxy as a missionary means is that its evangelistic products cannot uniformly be relied upon as missionary factors. To this incongruity the defenders of the faith must address themselves, and when it is removed, evangelical Christianity will vindicate itself in triumphant missionary achievement. This defect is the weak place in the home base at present and the chief cause of embarrassment to the missionary enterprise. The statistical table in the associational minute is a good index to the soundness and sincerity of the faith of the churches reporting there.

4. America presents unique possibilities for a home base in its potential missionary message. The primary reason for going on a mission to the non-Christian nations is found in the message which was given us to carry to them, and this message is an indispensable equipment for missionary service. All the sending and all the going is for the purpose of carrying this message. The man or the denomination without this message is without a mission. Responsibility for the missionary enterprise rests upon those who have a gospel to propagate. A profession of evangelical orthodoxy is an acknowledgment of the most binding missionary obligation. It is in this fact that America should constitute the strongest base for evangelical foreign missions. Not only does a larger number of our people hold this faith by a voluntary choice, but evangelical Christian faith has here fewer handicaps, and is freer from diluting elements than in

any other land of the globe. There cannot be found in any other land an equal number of men and women who believe with the same confidence that American Christians do in the unique inspiration of the Scriptures, the miraculous birth, the deity and the vicarious atonement of Christ; in the reality of the new birth and the continuity of moral law. This faith constitutes a potential missionary message, and creates peculiar missionary obligation. This truth ought to be brought home to American Christians until all orthodoxy becomes a reliable part of the home base, and by such augmentation of resources, the campaign is strengthened to the uttermost outpost.

5. Evangelical Christianity has in America a strategical position for a home base. We hold here a continent of marvelous resources, which lies peacefully between the world's two great oceans, the turbulent nations, and between the corroding Christianity of Europe and the virgin mission fields of the East. In security, serenity and high self-containment we look upon the world's tumult and need with collected wits and the bounties of nature and of grace at our disposal. From such a base we can dispense our gospel treasures if we have the heart to do it.

II.

The elements enumerated set America in a unique place as a base for the foreign mission enterprise. But the importance of this base is further magnified by exigencies in the campaign itself, which even now compel a new dependence upon America for further operations. There has for some time been a converging of the lines of circumstance which to a remarkable degree fix a new responsibility upon America.

1. There has developed a situation which may be called a diplomatic opportunity for American foreign missions. America has had fewer entangling alliances with the nations which constitute the great foreign mis-

sion fields of the world than any of the principal nations from which evangelical Christianity is sending forth missionaries. There are, therefore, fewer causes for alienation, suspicion and prejudice to be overcome by our Christian representatives than by those from England for instance, whose opium trade was enforced and guarded by gunboats, or Germany whose forts have been built on Chinese soil and have menaced her liberty and threatened her citizens. America is educating more of the future statesmen of China than all Europe. Men are struggling up to democracy everywhere, and all recognize America as the pioneer, the expounder and exemplar of democracy, and upon closer acquaintance will learn that evangelical religion has more than all else fed the springs out of which have flowed personal liberty and self-government. More and more in the two great heathen nations governed by heathen rulers, there is outspoken acknowledgment that both politics and business need a stronger moral basis than the religions of these lands can supply. Many thousands of dollars have recently been given by non-Christian statesmen in China and Japan to Christian enterprises conducted by American missionaries. The psychological moment and the diplomatic opportunity have fully come for thrilling achievement in these lands. The only serious difficulty in the way is that the home base does not promise the necessary support for the sweeping campaign necessary to realize these victories. Mr. Sherwood Eddy, who perhaps knows as well as any other living man the present spiritual temper and mental attitude of the ruling Chinese statesmen toward America and evangelical Christian approach from America, says: "China today stands in the crisis of her history. She looks to America as her friend among the nations. The great Sister Republic of the Pacific deserves our sympathy and our help. The 'yellow peril' is today the golden opportunity of the West." A golden opportunity in the West is a weighty responsibility in America.

2. There has in recent years been witnessed an increasing incapacity in some of our allies in this holy cause for effective work especially on certain foreign mission fields. For some time large sections of trans-Atlantic Protestantism has been undergoing gradual changes which impairs its witness for the evangelical faith. The depletion of resources is not so serious as the devitalization of the missionary message. The growing tendency to archaic ecclesiasticisms and to an inefficacious sacerdotalism has steadily incapacitated certain Protestant bodies for a vitalizing missionary service in China and for a work of reformation in papal fields. Educational work has under favorable conditions, kept up a semblance of success for some who could not, under tendencies observable at their home base, long administer the Christianity which China and all Roman Catholic countries need above everything else. The Romanizing influences of a respectable clergy in England are sapping the evangelical Christianity which the establishment administers of its essential vitalities. At last this growing tendency has developed into serious indisposition to attempt mission work on Roman Catholic fields. This affected the mind of the Edinburgh Conference and influenced its actions. These facts more than hint at a larger task for an uncontaminated and unfettered evangelicalism. The message which can accomplish the missionary purposes of Christianity in China and elsewhere must be free from ceremonialism, full in gospel content and fresh in spiritual savor. Such a message alone contains dynamics equal to the task which confronts our mission boards with a challenge. Those who have therefore a pure gospel have the greater responsibility. Evangelical Christianity in America has a mission because it has a message.

3. The European War is another recent circumstance which enhances the relief in which Providence has set our Christian duty to the unsaved millions in heathen lands, and by which is plainly indicated the largeness and im-

mediateness of our responsibility. The future historian will probably write this gigantic struggle down as *THE GREAT WAR*. It is quite probable that it will not have in all reliable historical records a parallel in destruction of life and property. Fabulous fortunes and the flower of European young manhood are being consumed by it. That which the missionary enterprise stands in need of, namely, young men and money, are sacrificed on the altar of war, even while the Macedonian call of opportunity sounds across the sea and from all the mission fields. The only allies the evangelical Christians of America had for the campaign against heathenism are now affected by this war, and are having their resources consumed by it. The mission boards of England have exhibited a valor equal to that displayed by her armies in the avowed purpose to maintain their foreign mission gifts, notwithstanding the staggering losses. But the end is not yet, and it is unreasonable to expect these boards to keep up this standard of work. Already German boards have dismissed more than two hundred missionaries, and put the rest on half pay. The sixteen million dollars which British and European societies have given annually to back up this enterprise will undoubtedly be materially reduced, perhaps by one-half. Who shall take up the burden of this deficit? There is as a matter of fact no one to take it up if the evangelical Christians of America decline the honor and shirk the duty. We can, however, do it if we will and without feeling a pinch of the hardship that our crippled allies in this cause are enduring.

III.

The fact that we have in America a potential base of such significance, and that circumstances conspire to render the foreign mission campaign so largely dependent upon this base, suggest that the strengthening of this base is a foreign mission work of high rank. Whatever

is essential to the enterprise is an important part of it. There is nothing connected with this world enterprise more important than the work of completing the task of converting some twenty-five million Christians in the evangelical churches of America into reliable foreign mission assets. What then are some of the things to be done and points to be guarded in order that we may render the home base adequate and reliable for an expanding and winning campaign?

1. The task demands, of course, a high order of constructive Christian and missionary statesmanship. Sanity, tactfulness and courage are indispensable qualifications in those who are to enlist, train and lead these hosts in a mighty campaign which shall carry this holy war to victory. Mr. John R. Mott in his latest book, "The Present World Situation" quotes the London *Spectator* to the effect that there is "one feature in the present aspect of the world which is most unusual, and that is the contrast between the magnitude of events occurring around us and the smallness, or rather, the second-rateness of the men supposed to guide them." Mr. Mott elaborates that statement and applies it to the missionary leadership which deals with the many problems on the foreign field. But the home base also has its problems which make demands for statesmanship on the part of pastors and other leaders whose task it is to increase its efficiency. There is need of men to shape the situation at home, who love the cause above all personal whims, and personal ambitions, and who in singleness of eye for the cause will neither play to lower nor upper galleries. The need is for missionary statesmen *versus* the official commander, *versus* the politician, *versus* the demagogue. All these have afflicted the missionary cause at one time or another in one place or another. We cannot back an imperialistic program such as is outlined in the Commission, without resources of wisdom and consecrated diplomacy. American Baptists have had men who exemplified these elements of leader-

ship. They still need such men. The magnitude of the task, the proportion to which our missionary operations have grown, the number and personnel of the forces to be led, the varied problems to be solved, including as they do financing the work, economy of administration, unity of the forces, the conservation of denominational integrity, questions of Christian comity, and many others, call for men with more than new eras in their purpose and empires in their brain.

2. There must be a more comprehensive grasp of the home situation and a more minute application of attention to the matters which affect the efficiency and reliability of the base. There are magnitudes in the problem of the home base; there are millions of individuals scattered over the continent to be incorporated into the supporting forces of the enterprise. It is not an easy mental feat to grasp a million units, but it is even more difficult when the figures stand for so many individual, independent Baptists of varying mind, holding membership in independent church groups more or less loosely related, distributed in two general conventions, some fifty state organizations and nearly fifteen hundred district associations. To put in operation plans which will after awhile reach every one of these individual Baptists and each unit of organization, and build up out of them a home base in which every part shall be dependable and contribute relatively its maximum of strength to the whole, is a mission challenge to thoughtful men among us. Such a scheme of base building must be projected and worked as will insure a definite utilization of every unit in the home Christianity and organization for the specific support of the foreign mission enterprise; and the work which accomplishes this must proceed so orderly and intelligently that we may know what progress has been made, and what at any time remains to be done. Haphazard effort may get helpful results in particular instances, but can never build up a base strong at every point and affording

a constant reliable support to the great enterprise; and the enterprise itself cannot be projected with confidence and steady courage so long as home support fluctuates and is uncertain.

This is axiomatic; but what is the remedy which skill must apply? Are there any guiding principles for the construction of a reliable home base and the provision of steady supplies for the campaign? It should have occurred to us long ago that the Scriptures contain some specifications for base building, and for the relief of the chief embarrassment which has confused the enterprise. As a matter of fact the Commission which orders the campaign, and the inspired history of its early triumphs, contain specifications which cover our baffling difficulty. The Commission enjoins a message in the words, "Preach the gospel to every creature," and it prescribes a missionary duty for those who believe in the words "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." Doubtless these words include the duty of teaching converts a proper observance of the ordinances and the close guarding of the gospel message, but they include more than this. This Commission is first of all, and most of all, a missionary edict, and the words hint at the method. The teaching here is not intellectual, theoretic, cultural; it is practical. Preachers are commanded to instruct their converts in how to do the thing which the Commission commands. They must, of course, apply the best mission motives, but they must also apply the best mission methods. This task with the converts is not finished until these are engaged in "doing the truth" and in observing the best way of promoting it. A Scriptural method of church finance sustains an essential relation to this work, teaching them to observe all things. Individual stewardship, systematic, regular, proportionate giving are observances which are vital to the execution of the Commission, and failure to teach the Scriptural observance here is a probable cost the missionary cause

PACIFIC COAST BAPTIST

THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

2606 DWIGHT WAY,

BERKELEY, CAL.

as serious shortening of its victories as any dereliction of which Christian leaders are guilty. Carelessness and indifference to a matter so vital to the scheme of world evangelization is to be classed with irregularity concerning one of the ordinances or other observance specified by the Scriptures. The efficiency of the home base demands that a thoroughly comprehensive plan shall be executed to place every church member on the list of regular, systematic, proportionate givers, and that this plan shall be worked so orderly that the results may at any time be checked up, and the remaining task distinctly located. This work is in progress and already gratifying results have been secured. It must be continued with increased vigor and orderliness.

3. To increase the efficiency of the home base the channels of approach to the churches, even the feeblest and remotest, must be kept open for the general mission agencies. This is not only essential to the life of the agencies themselves, but to the missionary life of the churches at home. These open channels afford opportunity for constant missionary revitalization of the home base. The general mission board is a purveyor of ideas and ideals; it kindles missionary passion, expands vision and creates a missionary atmosphere; it garners and imparts information, fosters large view and familiarizes with a great program; it excites co-operative sympathy and stimulates a consciousness of denominational power. These things are possible through the literature of the Board, correspondence, personal visits of representatives, etc. By such means the general agencies are penetrating the masses who compose, or ought to compose, the home base, and imparting inspiration and a missionary mind and impulse to those who are providentially confined to isolated districts, and have little opportunity to touch or be touched by the great currents of modern religious thought and life. While the boards draw from the people and bear their gifts to sections of need to

which they are consigned, they ought also to be charged with the duty of giving back to the churches information and inspiration gathered through opportunity for larger outlook, in order that the lives of our people may be enriched and their missionary life fed. This form of work is essential to the efficiency of the home base, and it cannot be done by anyone of the more local agencies in the home organization alone. It would be as reasonable to attempt to run a college with one man teaching all branches, as to expect any one agency, however, efficient, to give to the millions of Christians at home all they ought to know about state, home and foreign missions. The churches ought to be open to all denominational agencies. Those which have been given an opportunity and are by knowledge inflamed with a peculiar zeal for a given enterprise ought to be given the opportunity to tell what they know and feel. The mission board in its proper function is not so much a getter of money as a begetter of missionary spirit.

4. Given information about the great causes and proper motives for their support, we ought to trust the individual conscience to give discriminatingly. The ideal giver is a Christian who knows and feels the claim of the respective objects which have a right to appeal to his benevolence, and whose conscience acts automatically, that is from the inherent force of knowledge and love within him, and not under the mechanical manipulation of someone whose interest it is to boost a certain job. Until our people are informed concerning the respective claims of the great Christian enterprises, they are liable to become the victims of the manipulator, sometimes self-appointed, and make disproportionate gifts to subordinate objects.

The Spirit of Christ, which is the Spirit of missions, should be so palpable in the home constituency that missions would become the normal Christian activity. A

Christian ought to have as restless a passion for lost nations as a lost man has for the Saviour when the Spirit has convinced him of sin. The realization of this ideal is a distant hope, but is one which must never be abandoned. The effort to produce such a Christian life at home is a necessary part of the work which has for its end the making of Christians abroad.