

# World Missionary Conference, 1910

*(To consider Missionary Problems in relation to the Non-Christian World)*

## THE HISTORY AND RECORDS OF THE CONFERENCE

TOGETHER WITH  
ADDRESSES DELIVERED AT THE  
EVENING MEETINGS

PUBLISHED FOR THE WORLD MISSIONARY CONFERENCE BY  
OLIPHANT, ANDERSON, & FERRIER  
EDINBURGH AND LONDON  
AND THE  
FLEMING H. REVELL COMPANY  
NEW YORK, CHICAGO, AND TORONTO

# THE DUTY OF CHRISTIAN NATIONS

## I.

BY THE ARCHBISHOP OF YORK

*Address delivered in the Assembly Hall on Sunday  
Evening, 19th June*

WE are assembled here as comrades in one common cause, yet you may permit one who unworthily occupies one of the most ancient, perhaps the most ancient, bishopric in the lands belonging to the British race to express the pleasure with which he finds himself, if only for one evening, in the midst of a Conference which, at the beginning of a new epoch, is facing new problems with the courage of the old faith, and is holding forth visions for a new age of a Christendom more united than it has been in its loyalty to its Lord. The subject on which I have been asked to speak is the attitude of Christian nations in their relation to non-Christian races. We have duties laid upon us, not only as members of Christian bodies or of Missionary Societies, but also as citizens of the respective nations to which we belong. National policy has the deepest and most far-reaching influence both upon the conduct of missionary enterprise and, what is perhaps equally important, upon the presentment of Christianity to the world. National policy is, after all, the expression of the public opinion of the nation, and whether that policy does or does not tend to the advancement of the Kingdom of Christ throughout the world, depends on the ideals and the activities of Christian citizens. I must content myself with trying to lay down three general principles.

The first is, and the most obvious, that it is the duty of Christian nations to make the aim of their policy, not only their own advantage, but the good of the non-Christian races whom they rule or with whom they come in contact. The history of the treatment of non-Christian races by professedly Christian races is one long illustration of the difficulty which human nature finds in its national policy to be true to this primary Christian law. We need not be surprised. The very instinct which leads Christian nations into contact with non-Christian races is itself necessarily independent of the Christian law. The instinct is not the good of the nations, but the pursuit of wealth. The first instinct which brings a Christian nation into contact with a non-Christian race is the desire to secure or open out markets for its trade. Let us at once acknowledge the good which incidentally the traders, the advance guard of Christian nations, very often do through the kindness of their hearts. But admitting that, we must also admit that their primary motive must always be a return for their own investments and the progress of their own trade and commerce. It is natural, it is almost inevitable that Governments at home, pressed by the economic conditions which they have to consider, should be keen to follow up the trader in the opening and securing of new markets in the world. It is also almost inevitable that they should follow in the wake, not only of the journeys, but of the motives of the trader. The trader, the company, the corporation, are always at the ear of Governments, which have the most obvious motives of interest to listen to them, and to further them. And what is of fundamental importance in the life of a Christian nation is this, that there should be also at the ear of Governments a counteracting influence acknowledging a higher law, insisting upon moral ideals as well as upon material advantages. In other words, a Christian nation cannot be true to the fundamental principles of Christian policy unless there is always a strong and active body of Christian public opinion, insisting that no native race shall be exploited merely for the benefit of trade and commerce.

There are, perhaps, three illustrations which at once arise

to our minds both of the need and of the danger of which we are thinking. The first is the history of the Congo Free State in Africa. There we have seen unfolded before our eyes what happens to non-Christian races when the activity of Christian citizenship has been allowed to go to sleep. Need I remind you of the principles, the professions, with which that great tract of the world was taken over under treaty responsibilities by Christian nations? All the powers exercising sovereign rights or having influence in the said territories undertook to watch over the preservation of the native races and the amelioration of the moral and material conditions of their existence, and to co-operate in the suppression of slavery. So much for Christian profession. Need I remind you of the sordid tale of actual practice? It is the tragedy of selfish interest, of money advantage, of what was rightly described here the other day as the Yellow Peril—the lust for gold—left to work its own way without the restraint and the activity of Christian citizenship. We are called upon in this Conference to find some opportunity of recording our conviction, representing many Christian nations, that if now we have to exercise some patience, it is a patience not less strong than our indignation, a patience made persistent by a set purpose that we shall never rest satisfied until the last traces of these indignities have been removed. Alas! we can make no reparation to the natives whose lives have been either lost or darkened, but at least there is time to make some reparation to what ought to be the outraged conscience of Christian nations.

But there is another lesson to be drawn from this sordid drama, and it is that, for the future, Christian citizenship must be alert before it is too late; and when we see around us signs of a desire to make rapid wealth out of the same rubber that has cost the Congo so dear, we must be sure that Christian citizenship at once makes it plain that no Government can be supported unless it takes prompt and immediate measures to see that that wealth is not obtained by wrongly exploiting the labour of the natives of other districts.

The second illustration which rises to our mind is, of

course, the equally sinister and sordid story of the opium trade in China. Can we reflect, we of the British race, without shame upon the fact that we made wars, we extorted treaties, in order that, for our commercial advantage, we should force on a non-Christian race the purchase of a drug which was ruining its moral character? Here, again, Christian citizenship can never rest until that shame has been removed. Our need is the greater because we are called to make a response to what I will venture to call the noble efforts of the Chinese themselves to throw off this peril. Could there be anything more prejudicial to the credit of Christianity in the eyes of the world than this, that when a non-Christian race shows itself eager to liberate itself from a moral curse, a Christian nation should be backward or suspicious in co-operating with its desires?

The third illustration is the traffic in liquor among non-Christian races. You have, perhaps, read the proceedings and the report of the Commission appointed to consider this matter in Western Africa, and there you can see (I make no comments on a difficult matter) the bias of Governments to protect the interests of trade and the bias of the missionary to protect the independent rights of self-development on the part of the natives. We can only too easily trust the bias of the Government to prevail. It is for Christian citizenship to see that the bias of the missionary obtains at least fair play.

The time has come when Christian nations must recognise missions and the missionary spirit which they rouse as an essential element in their corporate public life. Without the spirit of Christian missions, the instinct of expansion must inevitably go wrong. We cannot check that instinct; it is part of a great world movement. It is rather for us to use it and ennoble it; but, left to itself, it inevitably degrades both the people who are conscious of it and the people whom it reaches. It is for us, as Christian citizens, by our vigilance, by the way we keep public opinion informed of what is passing in all parts of the world, to see to it that the spirit of Christian missions is a public power.

The second principle is this—and it is not less im-

portant—it is the duty of Christian nations, even when they have accepted the principle of seeking the independent good of the non-Christian races whom they reach, to remember that it is perilous to give the benefits of material civilisation without strengthening moral and spiritual forces. Western civilisation, where it reaches non-Christian races, must inevitably disintegrate and dissolve. It cannot be too often repeated that it is not the missionary who breaks up the national life, the traditional religion and morals of the people; it is the white man himself. If he trades he unsettles. Still more, if he brings in, from sheer conscientiousness, the principles of justice, of government, of education, which he thinks to be involved in his own civilisation, he unsettles still more. British India is a case in point. There you see the white man's rule at its best. And because it is at its best, because it has gone furthest in bringing all the opportunities of civilisation, including education, within the reach of the natives, it has been most profoundly unsettling. It is not too much to say that the constructive work of material civilisation in India is gravely imperilled by the destructive influence it has had upon the traditions of morality and religion among which the people have been brought up. What we have to see to is this, that a Christian nation is not, so to say, allowed to begin a work which cannot but be full of the gravest moral danger, unless it is carried on in the way of securing that there shall be a constructive work restoring and re-establishing the moral and spiritual bases of national life. But what a Christian nation is bound to do its Government is bound not to do—it is pledged to the principle of neutrality. And, therefore, what the Government cannot do on its behalf, the Christian nation must ask missions to do. The Christian nation must turn, as part of its public policy, beyond the Government to the missions and ask them to undertake on its behalf the constructive moral and spiritual work which its Government is unable to perform. The difficulties are great, but they must be faced. The only reconstructive moral and spiritual force which can at once preserve what has been done by material civilisation and carry onward and

preserve the best life of the peoples, is the faith of Jesus Christ, the Lord of all men throughout the world.

The third principle is this: It is the duty of a Christian nation, in view of its responsibilities to non-Christian races, to maintain its own allegiance to Christian principles in its national life at home. Not only do Christian nations move in the midst of non-Christian races, but non-Christian races come into the midst of Christian nations to learn and observe. Our schools, workshops, and colleges are filled with the keenest intellects from India, China, and Japan. What are they learning of our boasted Christian civilisation? A Japanese minister came to me some years ago to ask if I would give him facilities for studying the way in which Christian civilisation in England had dealt with the problems of our cities in the east end of London. I knew what he would learn. I prayed that he might forget it. What are they learning of the place of Christianity in the real life of our people? I was told the other day of two brilliant Japanese students who spent a year in boarding-houses in the neighbourhood of the British Museum, and they had returned to Japan to say that, during their whole residence in the capital of a Christian nation, they had never met a family that so much as once observed the ordinances of its Christian religion. And what are they learning of our allegiance to the principles of the Christian moral law? For instance, they hear of us abroad doing everything we can to redeem and purify by Christian principles the stability of the family life. What will they think if they come to Christian nations and find them growing restive under the restraints of the Christian law? I think one of the messages of this Conference to Christian nations is the simple one, the direct one, the necessary one—see to it that your own nations are being made and kept Christian.

Here, in this Conference, we have assembled to do honour to those who, in the simplest and most sincere way, have accepted the challenge of the Lord Jesus Christ for immediate obedience—our missionaries. The challenge comes to us who occupy a humbler place as Christian citizens. I pray God we may accept it with an equal loyalty and courage.