

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

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THE PROBLEM OF CO-OPERATION BETWEEN FOREIGN AND NATIVE WORKERS

III.

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*Address delivered in the Assembly Hall on Monday
Evening, 20th June*

THE problem of race relationships is one of the most serious problems confronting the Church to-day. The bridging of the gulf between the East and West, and the attainment of a greater unity and common ground in Christ as the great Unifier of mankind, is one of the deepest needs of our time. Co-operation between the foreign and native workers can only result from proper relationship. Co-operation is ensured when the personal, official, and spiritual relationships are right, and is hindered when these relationships are wrong. The burden of my message is that, speaking broadly, at least in India, the relationship too often is not what it ought to be, and things must change, and change speedily, if there is to be a large measure of hearty co-operation between the foreign missionary and the Indian worker.

I desire to say that personally my relation with my foreign fellow-workers has been simply delightful, and that in all my travels throughout India I have received nothing but true courtesy and kindness from missionaries all over India, in many of whose homes I have been a welcomed guest. Moreover, in all that I say I want it to be clearly understood that I am fully aware of happy exceptions.

Having safeguarded my remarks with these preliminaries, I proceed to state plainly some of my convictions in regard to this subject. My personal observation during a period of ten years, some of which have been spent in travelling through different parts of India, in mission districts worked by different Missionary Societies, has revealed to me the fact that the relationship between the European missionaries and the Indian workers is far from what it ought to be, and that a certain aloofness, a lack of mutual understanding and openness, a great lack of frank intercourse and friendliness, exists throughout the country.

This is not only my own impression, but what I have gathered from a large number of my Indian brethren, and even a few European missionaries.

This feeling is stronger and more in evidence in some missions than in others. Some Missionary Societies are in great advance in this respect over others. In the Young Men's Christian Association we have a body that stands foremost in having successfully solved the problem. Now, if this separation is more or less widespread, and I am here to say that I know it is, we will agree that this state of affairs cannot but affect the co-operation of these two arms of missionary work, and it cannot but hinder the growth and development of the Church in India. So far as such a spirit exists, and wherever the spirit exists, it is impossible for the Church to fully develop a vigorous life and exhibit a united front to the non-Christian forces round about.

I do not deny that there is blame on both sides. That cannot but be so. I do not overlook the fact that hindrances to a proper relationship exist also on the side of the Indian Christians, but since my audience is not composed of these, I feel that it will serve no useful purpose to detail them here. Before my Indian friends I have endeavoured to remove the hindrances on their side, but what I plead for here is that the difficulties on the foreign missionary side may, if possible, be entirely done away.

I. Let us first consider the *personal* relationship that ought to exist for effective co-operation. For the ideal of this relationship we look to our Master and Lord. The relation-

ship between Him and His immediate disciples and fellow-workers was not only one of Teacher and pupils, Master and disciples, but, above all, that of Friend and friends. He placed Himself alongside of those weak, frail, and stumbling disciples as their Friend and Brother, and lifted them up to a clearer vision, stronger faith, and nobler life. The disciples were admitted into the closest friendship with their Divine Teacher, they learned to love Him, confide in Him, follow Him, and walk even as He walked.

Can it be truly said that the foreign missionary has become a *friend* to his fellow-workers? Can it be said that this has been his aim? I am afraid in many cases the answer must be in the negative. If it has been the aim, as I trust it has been, at least it has not been sufficiently avowed, nor always made manifest in action. I thankfully remember that there are scores of missionaries all over the country who are justly proud of the fact that they can count some at least of their Indian Christian fellow-workers among their truest friends, and there are Indian Christians in all parts of India who are deeply thankful to count among their closest friends many foreign missionaries. But such are far too few.

Friendship is more than condescending love. I do not for a moment deny that the foreign missionaries love the country and the people of the country for whom they have made such noble sacrifices, but friendship is more than the love of a benefactor. I cannot do better than quote the words of one who is himself a foreign missionary in South India. He writes: "The popular appellation in use about missionaries in this country is 'father'; but a time comes when children ought to begin—and if they develop normally, do begin—to think for themselves and to have aspirations and plans of their own. That is a critical time for the father in his relation to his children. His continued influence for good, at any rate for the greatest good, in his son's life now depends on his becoming the son's friend. This change from benefactor to friend implies that a new element of reciprocity is introduced. If I rightly regard a person as my friend, I respect his individuality and remember

that he has peculiarities, rights, and responsibilities of his own, which require, in some measure at any rate, that a feeling of equality and freedom shall pervade our relations and our intercourse with one another. This is the point where we find ourselves in India to-day."

But while "East is East and West is West," is such a friendship possible between two races, that in habits, customs, and modes of thought are so diametrically opposed to each other? I know in my own experience that such friendships *are* possible. I am thankful to say that some of my best friends are among the foreign missionaries. I can testify to the great enrichment that has come into my own life through these real friendships. This very enrichment impels me to plead with my missionary brethren that they will lay themselves out to form friendships with their Indian fellow-workers.

I quote another authority, this time from North India, the Lord Bishop of Lahore. He says: "With abundance of kind feeling for, and unsparing labour and self-denial on behalf of Indian Christians, the missionaries, except a few of the very best, seem to me to fail very largely in getting rid of an air of patronage and condescension, and in establishing a genuinely brotherly and happy relation as between equals with their Indian flocks, though amongst these there are gentlemen in every truest and best sense of the word, with whom relations of perfect equality ought easily to be established." Do not these voices from North and South call attention to the same danger and the one remedy?

The pioneer missionaries were "fathers" to the converts. The converts in their turn were glad to be their "children." But the difficulty in older missions now is that we have a new generation of younger missionaries who would like to be looked upon as fathers, and we have a new generation of Christians who do not wish to be treated like children. If the Christian community of the second and third generations, through the success of missionary work, has risen to the position when they do not any longer care to be treated like children, should we not be the first to recognise this new spirit and hasten to strengthen the relationship, by

becoming their friends? Is it not such a relationship, and such alone, that can, more than anything else, prevent the growth of the spirit of false independence, foolish impudence, and flagrant bitterness against missionaries that we often meet with in Indian Christian young men to-day?

The Bishop of Lahore goes on to make some practical suggestions. He says: "If we could get into the way of treating Indian Christians with perfect naturalness, exactly as we treat English friends, asking them more frequently to stay with us in our houses, and genuinely making friends of them, realising in how very many things we have to learn from them, and how large are the contributions which they can bring into the common stock—this, I believe, would do more than anything else to draw us more closely together again, and it would be to the non-Christian world an illustration of boundless potency and effect, of the unity into which our races can be brought within the body of Christ." Much can be done along these lines.

Let me give some extreme cases of the contrary attitude. I do it with the deepest pain in my own heart, feeling that if some of my missionary friends have failed, I am also responsible for it. I can now think of one Indian superintending missionary, for over fifteen years in responsible charge of large districts, who said recently that he had never been invited to a single meal at the house of any of his European missionary brethren. I think of a pastor, who is confessedly the right hand of a station missionary, who said to me that during the eighteen years he had been a pastor, his missionary had never once visited his humble home. Two men, holding very high positions in a native State, said to a friend of mine recently that though they had been for several years in the city, and even called on the missionary, the missionary never thought of returning the call. I remember two or three younger missionaries who have told me that while they themselves like to go and call on the leading Indian Christian gentlemen, their senior missionaries are against such innovations. I recall how years ago a young missionary told me of what he called the impudence of an Indian clergyman, who was a graduate of one of the

Indian universities, in going forward to shake hands with him. "This man," he said, "thinks, that because he is a graduate and has put on European costume, I must shake hands with him!"

I do not want you to think that these instances represent the general state of affairs, nor do I want you to think that these are but solitary instances. Even if they were solitary instances, occurrences of this extreme type ought to be impossible.

On the other hand, I can never forget a sight I saw near the foot of the Himalayas, on the borders of Kashmir. At dinner at a missionary's table the British Civil Surgeon of the district, the missionary, an American Secretary of the Y.M.C.A., a native pastor, and an ordinary catechist sat round the table, with the wife of the missionary presiding at the table. It was not a got-up show. The perfect ease with which the pastor and the catechist conducted themselves was proof positive that there the relationship was natural and customary. I noticed that that mission on the whole was far ahead in this respect of most others.

Let me not be misunderstood. I do not plead for returning calls, handshakes, chairs, dinners, and teas, *as such*. I do, on the other hand, plead for all of them and more if they can be expressions of a friendly feeling, if these or anything else can be the outward proofs of a real willingness on the part of the foreign missionary to show that he is in the midst of the people, to be to them, not a lord and a master, but a brother and a friend.

II. The effective co-operation will only be possible with a proper *official* relationship.

The official relationship generally prevalent at present between the missionary and the Indian worker is that between a master and servant; in fact, the word often used in South India by the low grade Indian workers in addressing missionaries is *ejaman* or master. The missionary is the paymaster, the worker his servant. As long as this relationship exists, we must admit that no sense of self-respect and individuality can grow in the Indian Church.

A missionary of the American Board said to me years ago

that the last words his Board Secretary spoke to him in New York harbour were, "Make yourself unnecessary in the field." I can bear testimony to the fact that that missionary is endeavouring to do it in the most tactful way. The aim of the Missionary Societies, we know, is to develop self-governing Churches and to give freedom and scope to indigenous leadership, and to strive to make themselves unnecessary in the field. But the Societies have not convinced the natives that this is their aim. Nay, in some missions Indian Christians truly, though I know erroneously, believe that the missionaries are against any full self-support and real self-government, because that will make them unnecessary in the leadership of the work. It is commonly supposed that the man of independent thought and action is the man least consulted in the administration of the mission. I know some instances where independent action in the smallest affair has been repressed, and indigenous efforts—even indigenous missionary efforts—have been looked upon with suspicion and distrust.

There can never be real progress unless the aspirations of the native Christians to self-government and independence are accepted, encouraged, and acted upon.

I do not forget there is too often a danger of Churches claiming complete self-government and full independence without any regard to the problem of self-support, and of individuals claiming equality in salary and desiring to be called "missionaries" of a foreign missionary society. While I am fully aware of these and similar dangers, I cannot but feel that in most older missions there is great room for advance in the direction indicated at this Conference.

In an article that appeared in a leading Anglo-Indian paper on the World Missionary Conference, the writer says: "The Indian Christian is kept in leading strings. It is true that of late years there has been among the leading missionary agencies a considerable advance in the way of giving Indian Christians more control over their own affairs, yet the reform movement is all too slow. Is it to be wondered at that young Indians of ability turn aside to the various secular professions where the powers they feel they possess will find a fuller scope

for their exercise? It is obviously unwise to go on from year to year drifting along in the old way, for it leads to the drifting away of the flower of the Indian Christian youth from the ministry of the Church."

Let me not be understood to say that this is the only cause why educated Christian young men do not enter the ministry. The question of salary, I am afraid, often takes too prominent a place in their minds. The spiritual life too often is not vigorous enough to overcome the temptations to earthly greatness. But at the same time it cannot be denied that some *are* kept away from the ministry because of the conditions existing in the missions.

I plead, therefore, that an advance step may be taken by transferring from foreigners to Indians responsibilities and privileges that are now too exclusively in the hands of the foreign missionary. Native Church Councils should be formed, where Indians could be trained in the administration of their own Churches. Missionary Conferences should find a place for Indian leaders, so that the Indian and the European may consult and work together for the welfare of the common work. The favourite phrases, "our money," "our control," must go. Native Christian opinion ought to be constantly consulted in regard to any fresh step taken. In short, all along the line, the foreign missionary should exhibit unmistakably that he is not afraid to give up positions of leadership and authority into the hands of his Indian fellow-worker, and that his joy is fulfilled when he decreases and the Indian brother increases.

I am fully aware of the fact that all advance in responsibility should be transferred *gradually* and not by the sudden withdrawal of foreign funds and control. But gradually, but none the less steadily, it *should be done*. For, without growing responsibility, character will not be made. We shall learn to walk only by walking—perchance only by falling and learning from our mistakes, but never by being kept in leading strings until we arrive at maturity.

If such an advance is to be made, what should be the relationship of the foreign missionary to the Indian Christian leaders? Surely, that of a friend. To quote again:

“The foreign missionary’s official connection with the Indian Church must cease some day. If, when that day comes, the leading Indian Christians are looking upon us as old, jealous fathers, who did not seem to like the idea of their children trying to stand on their own feet, we are not likely to be consulted by them at those junctures when a word of advice or encouragement might be badly needed. Even if the situation is felt to be difficult, it will be a matter of honour to the children who have set out to build their own house to show that they can manage their own affairs. But if we are regarded by them as friends, they will continue to be willing, when need arises, to seek and receive advice from us, even though they are no longer under any obligation to be guided by us.”

III. True co-operation is possible only with a proper *spiritual* relationship.

No personal relationship will be true and permanent that is not built on a spiritual basis. India is a land that has a “religious atmosphere.” To the Hindu “the one and only ultimate is God : his great and only reality the unseen : his true and eternal environment the spiritual.”

In such a land, therefore, the easiest point of contact with the heart is on the spiritual side. The Indian nature has aptitude to develop devotional meditation and prayer, resignation and obedience to the will of God, the Christian graces of patience, meekness, and humility, the life of denial of self, the cultivation of fellowship and communion and the practice of the presence of God. These elements of Christian mysticism find a natural soil in the Indian heart. Not by decrying this aspect of the Christian life, but only by cultivating it and developing it in himself can a foreigner win the heart of an Indian. It is then, and then only, the westerner can impart to him what naturally he has not : elements of Christian character, Christian activity, and Christian organisation. These characteristics which the westerner has developed often fail to appeal to the Indian, because too often they are advocated by men who have not reached the heart of the Indian through finding the point of contact.

Whatever others may think, I do not myself look forward

to any time in the near future when we in India will not need the western missionary to be our spiritual guides and helpers. Through your inheritance of centuries of Christian life you are able to impart to us many things that we lack. And in this sphere I think the westerner will be for years to come a necessity. It is in this co-operation of joint study at the feet of Christ that we shall realise the oneness of the Body of Christ. The exceeding riches of the glory of Christ can be fully realised not by the Englishman, the American, and the Continental alone, nor by the Japanese, the Chinese, and the Indians by themselves—but by all working together, worshipping together, and learning together the Perfect Image of our Lord and Christ. It is only “with all Saints” that we can “comprehend the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that we might be filled with all the fulness of God.” This will be possible only from spiritual friendships between the two races. We ought to be willing to learn from one another and to help one another.

Through all the ages to come the Indian Church will rise up in gratitude to attest the heroism and self-denying labours of the missionary body. You have given your goods to feed the poor. You have given your bodies to be burned. We also ask for *love*. Give us FRIENDS!