

**THE
CHRISTIAN MISSION
IN RELATION TO
RURAL PROBLEMS**

Report of the
JERUSALEM MEETING
of the
INTERNATIONAL MISSIONARY COUNCIL
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PART FOUR
STATEMENT

**ADOPTED BY THE INTERNATIONAL MISSION-
ARY COUNCIL MEETING AT JERUSALEM, 1928**

The following statement was prepared by a committee appointed by the section of the Council which discussed the Christian Mission in Relation to Rural Problems. After consideration and amendment by the Council as a whole it was accepted by formal vote as their official statement.

STATEMENT ADOPTED BY THE COUNCIL

THE CHRISTIAN MISSION IN RELATION TO RURAL PROBLEMS IN ASIA AND AFRICA

THE INCLUSIVE PURPOSE OF MISSIONS

THE one inclusive purpose of the missionary enterprise is to present Jesus Christ to men and women the world over as their Redeemer, and to win them for entrance into the joy of His discipleship. In this endeavour we realize that man is a unity, and that his spiritual life is indivisibly rooted in all his conditions—physical, mental and social. We are therefore desirous that the programme of missionary work among all peoples may be sufficiently comprehensive to serve the whole man in every aspect of his life and relationships.

More especially we desire to bring home emphatically both to the mission boards and to the indigenous churches the necessity of a comprehensive programme for those larger sections of the population in any country who labour for mankind in field or factory and who, in many parts of the world as at present ordered, are without many of the conditions necessary for that abundant life which our God and Father desires for all His children.

THE RURAL PROBLEM FROM THE CHRISTIAN POINT OF VIEW

The rural work in mission fields is an organic part of the service demanded of the Church everywhere

—East and West—to lead in the effort to build a rural civilization that shall be Christian to the core. This effort looks toward the development of an intelligent, literate and efficient rural population, well organized and well led, who shall share the economic, the political and the social emancipation, as well as the continued advancement of the masses of men, who shall participate fully in world affairs, and who shall be moved and inspired by the Christian spirit.

Specific attention to rural needs by missions and churches is necessary, in part because of the numbers of people involved—nearly a thousand million of them—and the great issues of Christian civilization at stake ; but also because the rural people live apart from the centres of wealth and population, their occupations differ in many respects from those of industrial and urban places, and many aspects of their institutional and group life have no counterpart in the city. Moreover this great branch of mission service, in all its implications for Kingdom-building, is not now sufficiently covered, either as to policies and programmes or as to specially trained leadership and adequate financial support.

THE RURAL COMMUNITY AS THE UNIT OF WORK

While it is vital to rural missions that these comprehensive aims shall be followed steadfastly, and that the work shall be properly led and financed, it is obvious that in many countries the entire needs of the rural population can by no means be reached by missionary endeavour alone. The only practicable way is to select suitable rural centres and demonstrate in them an intensive form of work that may

eventually spread over wide areas as the Church grows in power and influence. In such a centre the missionary himself should live; there, rather than in a town or city, should be the training centre for leaders and workers drawn from the Church; and there should be established missionary institutions for rural education. As modern facilities of communication and transportation increase, such an arrangement should become more and more feasible.

This intensive plan is necessary not only because of the huge populations involved in many countries, but because these local units are normal groupings of the people. Here they live and work together. Here are rooted the family loyalties. There are usually common occupational interests. Whether in villages or among those living on scattered homesteads there are many bonds of mutual interest to be found in these small geographical areas. Each one is a world in little. The rural world can be made Christian only as these small communities are made Christian.

The local community therefore is the natural and most effective social unit of organization for rural progress the world over. Rural missions should utilize this fact to the full, by seeking to redeem body, mind, and soul. The Christian Church should claim the religious leadership of the community, but all agencies should be community-minded, help to develop consciousness of community, encourage a sane community patriotism and seek to make of the community a true family of families. It should be the aim of the Church to help to correlate all forces in the fundamental and inclusive task of creating a real Kingdom of God in this natural human grouping that we call the community.

THE AIMS IN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

The following are the main objectives in the effort to create and maintain the Christian character in rural communities. While they have been differentiated for purposes of presentation, it is obvious that they are vitally inter-related. From the Christian viewpoint religion should permeate and dominate all the life of the community.

1. The development of Christian character, Christian fellowship and Christian service.

2. Healthful living in a healthy environment.

3. The effective cultivation of the physical resources necessary to the food supply and the sound economic development of people in villages and in the open country.

4. The improvement of family life through a knowledge of such home activities as the care of children, food, sleeping facilities, sanitation and all that centres about the life of women and children.

5. A social attitude toward neighbours which makes possible sincere co-operation despite obstacles of religion, nationality, race, colour or language.

6. The constant re-creation of personality—physical, mental and spiritual—which may be gained not only from a sound use of leisure time, but from an appreciation of the beautiful, the good and the inspiring in nature and in humanity.

AGENCIES FOR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

It is important to realize that if a community is to be built up it should build itself up; and therefore the wise builder will be careful to confine himself so far as possible to assisting the community to utilize

every individual, agency and organization available within itself. The main agencies upon which we must rely are the following :

1. The family and the home, as the conserver of the race, and the nursery of Christian character. While every care should be exercised to preserve all that is of permanent value in indigenous family systems, emphasis should be laid upon reaching and renewing the life of the family, and on making it the basal factor of the community life. To this end, work for women should receive major attention and a larger range of activity be opened up for them.

2. The Church and religious organizations of every desirable type, as the fellowship of believers in Jesus and the exemplars of His way of life. The church building should be not only a place of worship and prayer, but should be made a rallying centre for the community. The programme of the Church should be extensive enough to enable it to minister to the whole life of the whole community, in co-operation with other organizations. To this end the rural church should be provided with an adequate and suitably trained ministry.

3. The school, as the centre of all those educational forces that shall train children and youth, and assist in the various forms of adult and mass education. In this connexion we note with satisfaction that there is a movement in some countries toward giving special attention to rural education as important in itself and as having distinct problems of its own. We would emphasize the necessity of bringing to bear upon rural schools, and the training of teachers for them, all the best results of pedagogic science and practice available, so as vitally to relate them to the actual conditions of rural life.

4. Voluntary organizations, both economic and social, that shall provide for collective effort in the business and social life of the community, such as organizations for financing, buying and selling, insurance, arbitration, as well as for various social activities, such as for child welfare, health, maternity training, recreation. The closest possible co-operative relations should be established with local non-Christian organizations whose object is the building of a better community, and our knowledge and experience should be placed at their disposal if it will assist in making their work effective. It is important to remember that all such organizations afford rural people an opportunity for training in self-government.

5. Government, in its various aspects of law and of administration, of protection and of research that shall utilize public funds for the general good of the community. Wherever governments are endeavouring to lift up the rural life economically and socially they should receive our intelligent, consistent and continuous co-operation. Rather than duplicate such work we should do all within our power to extend the benefits of the government's efforts by encouraging the people to take advantage to the fullest degree of what it is doing.

EDUCATION AS FUNDAMENTAL METHOD

To assist these agencies to undertake and carry out a wise and constructive programme of community service, the methods employed should be carefully and scientifically worked out as a species of education, understanding that term in its widest significance—education for the young and the adult—and in-

clusive of a continuous process of research relative to conditions and resources, in order that procedure may be always based on ascertained facts, as well as in accordance with sound principles.

The needs of the rural community are grave and urgent; the masses of population are rapidly increasing in many countries; Christian work in a community tends to raise its standards and to multiply its requirements. It is therefore time for missions to realize that along with a more effective type of education for children and youth, it is urgently necessary to carry out a programme of adult and mass education, through the eye and the ear, and through individual and corporate activities, in regard to all those matters which are responsible for afflicting the rural people with disease, drunkenness, poverty, indebtedness, litigation and superstition, as well as in all the constructive ideas and ideals that lift people to the highest levels of life. This process of education in the widest sense implies the full utilization of the potentialities of the family and the Church, and of every other community organization. In fact, the work should be theirs, the missionary guiding and assisting them.

Suitable literature for old and young, both for religious and general education, needs to be provided to a far greater extent than at present, especially for those who have acquired literacy as adults.

In the planning and carrying out of such educational processes for the young and the adult, close co-operation should be sought and maintained with the State and with all secular organizations which are engaged in the same or connected services.

LEADERSHIP

To lead in such a programme of rural service it is imperative that a suitable training should be given to carefully selected men and women drawn from the community itself. In addition to paid, full-time workers, so selected and trained, we trust a large number of voluntary workers will be called forth by a sense of spiritual, civic, patriotic or tribal responsibility. The establishment and success of the services we have discussed, as a normal movement which is part of the life of the community, depend largely on the number and quality of such leaders and the suitability of their training.

We have already referred to the training of the teaching staff for rural schools. We would make it clear that all catechists, rural pastors, rural doctors and in fact every kind of Christian worker in rural parts, should be provided with a training that will acquaint him in a direct and personal way with the diverse conditions of rural life, and with a knowledge of the resources whence he could draw for solving its problems, alleviating its sufferings or preventing its evils. Provision should be made for visiting teachers and 'refresher' courses, to maintain the rural worker in his knowledge and efficiency. It might well be that in many fields such training arrangements could best be organized co-operatively by several missions working in the same area.

The necessity for specialized training applies with particular force to trainers of workers and to general supervisors, whether foreign missionaries or nationals, who seek to serve in rural fields. To some areas it is even necessary to send out missionaries technically qualified in agriculture or in some line of industry.

In other countries, where the State at public expense undertakes the provision of agricultural and industrial education and of demonstration on a more or less adequate scale, it would still be necessary that the individual sent to rural parts be given a thorough grounding in community service and in methods of effective social organization. It will be his responsibility to train the workers to do rural service on a sound and comprehensive basis. It is quite as important to provide a suitable specialized training for these persons as it is for those who are sent out to work in hospitals or colleges. It should be remembered that candidates with the very best qualifications are as necessary for work in rural parts as for any branch of missionary activity.

We desire to lay special emphasis upon the importance which attaches to the home and its service to and relationships with the community. Too frequently missionary work in rural areas neglects the woman, especially with reference to her contributions, both as an individual and as home-maker, to community welfare. Both in general and religious education of children, the mother's influence may be almost decisive. All, therefore, that has been said with reference to education applies with equal force to the selection and training of women workers in the field and of women missionaries who are sent there.

SOME GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

It will be observed that this report on rural needs has not presented a list of items that may be parts of the concrete programme of a mission, a church, a Christian school or of an individual worker of any type, in a rural community, and that thereby it lays

itself open to the criticism of being too general. Ample material of this sort was available in printed reports before us, in invaluable memoranda prepared by some of the delegations to this conference, and in various missions which have had experience in rural work, but to outline a specific programme to meet rural needs everywhere is an impossible task. Situations and stages of development differ in various countries and even in different parts of the same country. Indeed, there are hardly two rural communities in any country that have the same needs. In some countries the government is doing much for rural people, and permits a wide range of mission activities. In other countries, for the present at least, the opposite is true. It seemed best, therefore, to attempt a statement of such fundamental considerations as it is believed are valid in practically all countries, and that are good for all programmes of rural advancement, under whatever auspices. At the same time, the special needs, problems and responsibilities of rural mission work have been kept in mind.

Every effort should be made to convince the members of rural communities of the advantages of rural life, and to foster an interest in the pursuits incident to it. Man is an integral part of God's physical creation, and much of his best education, as well as of his moral and spiritual development, can still be drawn from the environment that rural life affords. The full possibilities of rural life, with its essential oneness with the works and ways of God in nature, its poetry and its beauty, have not been fully explored or utilized in education or in religious teaching for rural folk. The dignity and the mental and moral values in the manual work of the farm, for example, are not only of worth in education, but

may assist in giving added interest to rural life itself. We cannot wholly stem the tides of economic forces that call people away from the farm to the city ; but we can at least teach the youth who have gifts and liking for rural life the possibilities for the full life that inhere in the rural environment.

In all plans for religious education, the distinct needs of rural people, both young and old, should be recognized and provided for. The countryside as well as the Bible itself is rich in materials that have special meaning to those who know at first hand soil and plant and animal, and whose work is under the open sky. The moral and spiritual values of the farmer's work, his stewardship of the soil, the greatest material resource which God has given His children ; the farmer's service to his fellow-men in producing the primary physical need of mankind—food ; the farmer's need of discovering God's laws and how to conform to them, how he can more fully be a worker together with God ; these are distinct and peculiar opportunities for Christian teaching and preaching among rural folk.

The spiritual inheritance of a nation is to be christianized and taken over into the Church. Hence attention should be given to the customs, the language, the social construction of the rural population, with a view to the preservation of all that is best in them. Here are to be found some of the soundest elements of a permanent national life. If the Gospel is to become the very throb of the heart of a nation, then the feelings and thoughts and needs of the rural population must be known and met alike by preachers, teachers and missionaries. In this way may be conserved one of the indispensable conditions by which a nation may be protected against such ele-

ments in a foreign civilization as might undermine the spiritual life of the indigenous peoples.

We recognize with gratitude the service of those Christian colleges which have developed agricultural departments. While the rural need in mission fields is not merely nor chiefly that the farmer shall be shown how to grow greater crops, nevertheless in many countries scientific and technical work in agriculture is one of the largest contributions to be made to rural welfare. These colleges, moreover, are in many areas needed as training-ground for leaders, not alone in agriculture, science and practice, but for working at the major economic and social problems of the countryside. Their threefold service of research, leader-training and extension work directly to the farmers themselves constitutes a major possibility in any large programme of rural missions.

HELP WHICH MIGHT BE GIVEN BY THE NATIONAL CHRISTIAN COUNCILS AND BY THE INTERNATIONAL MISSIONARY COUNCIL

We have been impressed by the array of facts relative to the many forms of actual rural service in various parts of the world presented to this Council. We are thankful for this, but it is evident that only the veriest beginning has yet been made compared with what is waiting to be done. It is the manifest duty of the International Missionary Council and the various national christian councils to bring this fact home to the mission boards and the churches, both in the field and in sending countries.

Moreover, as the volume of experience increases, the national christian council in each country and

the International Missionary Council centrally should continually make available a clear and accurate knowledge of the problems dealt with, the solutions attempted, and the failures and successes recorded.

In the finding and the training of the personnel needed for this service, the national christian councils and the International Missionary Council could be of great assistance to missions and churches, not only by direct work of the councils, but also by initiating arrangements for co-operative enterprises by the missions concerned, or preferably wherever possible by the missions, the secular organizations and the government together.

From time to time it will be necessary also to send round a country, or a larger or smaller area, an expert or experts in one or other line of rural service, to assist all concerned further to improve the quality of their service. In some of the larger areas, where the bulk of the population is distinctly rural, the national christian council of the country already needs a full-time officer to study and promote rural missionary service throughout the country.

We recommend that as soon as practicable the Committee of the International Missionary Council employ a competent staff member to give full time to the service of rural missions in all parts of the world.

CONCLUSION

In this immense rural work the missionary enterprise faces a great opportunity. Much work is under way, but much of it does not adequately affect the life and work of the people. To be fully successful, it must redeem whole communities and bring them into a new and abiding social vitality, a truly Christian

method of living together. The imperative need is for a statesmanlike programme of rural missions :

1. As to adequate objectives.
2. As to co-operation of missionary agencies.
3. As to aggressive and concrete programmes both for a national and area basis and for local community work.
4. As to financial support sufficient to carry on a real campaign in rural fields.
5. As to selection, enlistment and training of workers.

We appeal to all boards, officials, missionaries, churches, to all other lovers of their fellow-men, to assist in this work so vital to the world's welfare. The rural fields are indeed 'white unto the harvest.'