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# The Church and International Relations

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We may think of the church in either of two aspects. We may view it as an organization which, especially in the nineteenth century, has carried on large practical activities for the benefit of non-Christian nations in every corner of the world. These endeavors have covered primarily the teaching of the Christian faith. They have included also education in its various phases, medicine, charity, philanthropy and reform. They have aimed to confer the gifts of the Christian civilization. Always however this particular aspect of Christian internationalism has had in view mainly, if not solely, the non-Christian world.

Again, we may view the church as the center of the cultivation of a spirit on the part of its own members and of those who come under its influence. This spirit is to be the secret of the attitude of its membership toward other men of their own nation and, as well, toward the other nations of Christendom. This spirit is to be the inner principle of their activities, the atmosphere and determining quality in their contacts with men of every race, but especially with the nations most closely related to us by inheritance and tradition. The church is the institution which stands for the cultivation of a spirit which shall animate us in all relations with our brethren among our own people and with our brethren in the other Christian nations.

The Christian spirit is at the back of both of these manifestations of the life of the church. But the activity which is appropriate and beneficent in the one case, where the gifts of which we spoke are needed, is unnecessary in the other. In both relations the common element is the sense of the unity of humanity and of the duty and privilege of Christian men through their churches to serve all men everywhere. In the opening paragraph I alluded to the missionary task of the church, which is certainly a phase of Christian internationalism. It is this phase which we have in mind, when we think of Asia, Africa or the islands of the sea. In the other I intended to intimate that outgoing of the Christian mind, that solicitude for the maintenance of Christian ideals, that high resolve for the performance of our Christian duty toward the nations of Europe which are near to us in the tradition of civilization and have been brought still nearer by the vicissitudes of the war.

Doubtless I owe my invitation to speak here on this subject to the fact that I have been for years connected with one of the missionary organizations through which the Christian public has sought to cultivate international relations of that first sort. Yet such a responsibility brings one into touch with men of almost every form of business and professional activity in Europe and America as well. It emphasizes the fact of the common life of humanity over the whole face of the earth. It makes us aware how large

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elements of the civilization which has been developed in Christendom have been appropriated by the non-Christian world as well.

It is a fact, noteworthy, if we think of it, that American Christians had developed an international sense and were prepared to undertake an international duty toward the non-Christian world almost from the beginning of our national life. The great Protestant missionary societies came into being no long time after the Declaration of Independence. On the other hand, we Christians of America were, for reasons into which I need not enter here, far more slow to develop a parallel sense of obligation toward Europe, the other half of Christendom. Throughout the nineteenth century we were somewhat remote from Europe and isolated in life and thought from the lands of our ancestors. We were independent of them and it would hardly have occurred to us that they could ever become dependent upon us. The war suddenly changed that situation. Yet the period since the armistice makes the impression upon an unbiased foreigner, and even upon one of us, that we Americans, Christians as truly as the rest, are now anxious mainly to revert to the old state of things. We are eager to regain our isolation. We hesitate as to international obligations. Again as before we would shun foreign entanglements. In a word, we seem disposed to proclaim again a self-centered nationalism, regardless of the needs and opportunities which the situation of the rest of Christendom entails. It is this state of things which has, I suppose, led those who framed this program to esteem this a timely topic,—the church and international relations.

We feel that the Christian spirit is the inner secret of our civilization. Without this our civilization would never have become what it is. In the loss of this spirit that civilization is doomed. We have seen the spread of the gospel produce a degree of civilization among men who had none. We have seen it transform in a measure the civilization of races which had and still have faiths different from our own. We have seen certain other elements of our civilization forced upon some unwilling nations, or again, eagerly appropriated by others. We have come to realize that this assimilation by eastern nations of our western standards in government and diplomacy, in military and naval administration, in trade and education and even in some phases of social life, is going forward irresistibly. If it goes on thus as a purely materialistic and secular movement, it is bound to be injurious. It will undermine the tradition of morals and destroy or gravely injure the ancient faiths of men, and put nothing in the place. We feel that it is the duty of the church at this moment to see to it that the Christian spirit has its full share in this world movement. Mission work, viewed in this large way ought, above all other works that I can think of, to draw the ends of the earth together. It undertakes to create a level of respectful and sympathetic contact with all races of mankind in the various aspects of their civilization, in the manifold traditions of their culture and the diversities of their faiths. These faiths we view as, one and all of them, evidence of men's seeking after God and witness of God's answer to the prayer of men. We feel the unity of humanity and the tragedy of the suspicions and fears, the hatreds and violence, the misunderstandings and selfish interests which prevent that unity from finding its expression.

Through the experience of the Christian public organized in our churches we Americans had acquired, during the last one hundred and twenty-five years, a measure of understanding of the non-Christian world. That world was on the whole well disposed toward America. Those peoples were confident of our interest in them. We had not been entangled through our desire to appropriate Asiatic or African territory, nor had we as yet in large or very disreputable ways been compromised in our relations with them in trade. I speak cautiously, for there have been deplorable aspects of the trade and the diplomacy of every nation with the non-Christian world. The slave trade and the liquor traffic were surely iniquitous enough. We had our full share in them. Yet on the whole one may say that our relations had been upon a fairly high plane. That was an advantage. It was the explanation of the fact that some of those nations in their trouble looked to us for aid and understanding rather than to European states. We ought to be careful not to betray this trust nor through our absorption in our own interests or through fear of the vastness of new responsibilities, unnecessarily to disappoint their hopes.

With ever accelerating pace throughout the last two generations before the war, the boundaries of nationality were breaking down. Especially the great division between West and East tended to disappear. A common type of life and civilization was gaining ascendancy over the whole face of the earth. We spoke above as if there were a portion of the world wholly non-Christian. Certainly that is not the case. There is not a nation in the non-Christian world in which there are not today many converts to Christianity. There are Christian churches and educational institutions and hospitals which are often entirely on the responsibility of the indigenous peoples. Such organizations are the fruit of the missionary endeavor of the last century. Equally they are the seed of the new Christendom in Asia and Africa. Besides, there are the remnants of ancient Christian peoples, far older than any of our churches, older than any of our nations. Their ancestors were Christians of high culture when ours were wild men and pagans. They have been long under the heel of the oppressor. Their Christian thought and life had stagnated. Our task, in reverence for their age-long struggle and suffering, was only to do what we could to aid them in the renewal of their spiritual life.

Besides this conscious Christianity, there is also a still wider and more or less unconscious penetration of Christian ideas and permeation of Christian principles in the institutions and policies of all the peoples of which we speak. There has been an actual assimilation to Christian standards in much of the thought and life of peoples who still retain their old faiths, or who, even if they have lost these, show no disposition to take ours. These persons are like many among us, purely secular in mind. They are much moved by ethical and humanitarian as well as governmental and commercial impulses derived through their contacts with Christendom. These factors also have had great part in the transformation which is going on throughout the world. To both of these elements in the life, say of Japan or China or India, we ought to reach out. Both of them reach out to us. The first does so with a longing for our sympathy, with gratitude and with

a hope which we ought not to disappoint. The others often reach out to us with an eager desire, by no means for our Christianity, but rather for some of the many elements of outward greatness which Christendom possesses and by which, if these can be adopted, they expect to be able to resist the aggression of Christian nations. They hope thus to protect themselves against the violence of Christendom, to prevent the partitionment of their territories and the exploitation of their resources by Christian nations. It can escape no thoughtful observer that the eagerness of the East to appropriate many elements of the civilization which historically has been developed in the West springs occasionally, at least, from the fear of the West, from the determination of the East to maintain itself as over against the West. It has its root not in trust, but in distrust. It is the index not at all of a mind passive and plastic to our influence. On the contrary, it springs from such a resurgence of racial and national feeling as both the Far East and the Near East have never known since the Renaissance. It is this resurgence of self-conscious and often fierce nationalism in an East which is now armed with all the weapons of the West which we have to note. It is this which constitutes part of our problem as we think in terms of international relations. You have only to read the Indian newspapers of the day to note how political maxims which were never oriental are now part and parcel of the contention of Indians and Egyptians against British rule. They obtained these from the British whom they now denounce as their oppressors. You have only to think of industrial and commercial methods which were never current in China and Japan which are now brought into play against the Americans and Europeans from whom the Chinese and Japanese learned these methods not two generations ago. Here is assuredly a field for the play of a Christian internationalism for the manifestation of a spirit which it ought to be one of the first tasks of our churches to cultivate.

These phrases which we have just used lead over, however, into that portion of our discussion which remains. For they show how closely the problem of international relations between ourselves and the Orient now resembles that same problem as it exists between ourselves and the nations of Europe. The difference which was so obvious a hundred years ago has now largely disappeared. Yet it remains that an international attitude of mind which has long been common in our Christian communities toward the remoter nations of the world is not yet easily assumed toward the European countries which are the lands of our ancestors and the heirs with us of an identical tradition of civilization. Many things have contributed to this state of things. The early history of our country as an independent nation had its share in this result. The narrative of the Revolution was for a long time curiously distorted in the popular histories which constituted the instruction of our fathers in this regard. We were concentrated upon our own task. Our problems were all in our own land. We had all the self-consciousness and self-confidence of a very youthful people. Furthermore, it is not too much to say that even now there are undissolved elements in our population which have brought from some one of the countries of Europe their ancestral antagonisms to some other country in Europe. They continue, by a kind of instinct, misunderstandings and mutual hostilities

which have nothing to do with their present existence. They are eager to array all America on one side or another of contentions with which, in so far as they are really becoming Americans, fused in the life of this one nation, America has nothing to do. Some day this broad basis of the American people in racial traits derived from almost every people in the European world will be, let us hope, the ground of universal sympathies and understanding. At the present moment these traits are, on the contrary, often the occasion of serious misunderstandings.

The war caused all these minor questions for a moment to disappear. We were lifted by the great interests which were then at stake to forget the small ones. We achieved national unity within ourselves and an international attitude toward others which it ought to be one of our first concerns not to lose again. We felt, far more profoundly than we had ever done before, that the concerns of Europe and of the whole world were our concerns, that we could no longer live unto ourselves. That again is a sense so just, so truly corresponding with the facts of the case, with the needs of the world and our spiritual need, that it would be deplorable if we were to lose it again. Yet none of us can fail to realize that we are in imminent danger of losing it.

At the outbreak of the war, many among us viewed it as indeed a great catastrophe for Europeans, but a matter remotely concerning us. Before long our people as a whole began to realize that it was a crisis for civilization in the issue of which we also were inevitably bound up. Our sympathies were touched by the invasion of Belgium, by the deportations from France, by the tales, at first incredible, of the ferocity with which the war was being carried on. Slowly the American people made up its mind, and not least the Christian part of that people, that the whole world of ideas and principles to which we belonged was at stake. When the youth of our universities, the sons of our bodies as well as the sons of our souls, took themselves overseas to fight for the common cause and we were left behind to do what we could to uphold them in the struggle, there did pass over this nation the baptism of a lofty internationalism. We had a sense that we belonged to the world and that a part of the highest interest of the world, its liberty and enlightenment, the stability of institutions and the possibility of mercy was committed to us.

We know also how, after the armistice, a profound change came over the temper and understanding of our people. No one at first dreamed how deep the division of mind in our country was to go, or how the discussion would drag on. No one foresaw how this question of our taking part in the reconstruction of the world would become a football of partisan politics in a presidential year with all the sordidness which that implies. A large part of our American public did not realize what an opportunity we had to exert a moral influence in the stabilizing of international relations after the long agony of the war. Those nations expected moral and spiritual sympathy along with every other form of aid from this utterly unspent power from over the sea, unprejudiced for territorial reasons, uncompromised from the point of view of trade, unmoved by historical animosities and unhampered by colonial ambitions or jealousies. We had really entered the war for an

ideal. They thought that we would not desert them until in some measure that ideal had been secured. Had we, the mass of our people, realized how profoundly we were needed, I do not believe that our own problems which, after all, are relatively small, would ever have deterred us from seeking to fulfill so grand an obligation.

We have poured out our treasure to alleviate the miseries of sick and wounded, of widows and orphans, of homeless and impoverished, of people who have witnessed massacres and deportations or suffered famine and plague. We have not stopped with those who had been our associates in the struggle. We had reached out to those who have been our foes as well. We could not do otherwise. Yet the average comfortable American can form no conception of what parts of France and Italy, or again, of the Balkans and Asia Minor, look like. Nothing in his past enables him even to imagine the desolation and distress. He thinks the accounts exaggerated, sentimental, or even that they have their origin in propaganda. Besides all that, I recur again to the thought that it is not a still larger and ever-ending stream of beneficence which is the thing most needed. We poured out blood in the war. We have poured out money since the armistice. We have still one thing to give that the other nations sorely need. It is with nations as it is with individuals. That which is requisite to placing them again upon their own feet is something much more than material assistance. What is demanded of us is that we put our shoulder under some portion of their responsibility, that we take up a part of the burden of their anxieties, of the load laid upon them by that which they have suffered in their inner life. What is demanded is that we should give ourselves. We should know this to be true if we were trying to help individuals. It is not different in the helping of nations to the recovery of their own best selves and the reparation of the catastrophes of their inner life.

There is scarcely a nation in the world which is not yearning for our friendship and aid in the solving of the moral and spiritual problems of humanity, if we would only give them our friendship in the open-hearted way in which they once thought that we had given it. We ourselves once thought that we were giving it. This is a moral failure of the first magnitude. It may at any time become a catastrophe. It is not for us to sit silent in this condition. It is not for us to acquiesce in helplessness. It is for us to make that part of our American people which is still sound at heart hear what we have to say. It is for us to make our rulers hear what we have to say. It is for us to make other nations hear what we have to say. It is for us to win them to believe what we believe about our nation's better mind, despite the tragic failure of the past and the problematical appearances of the present. Above all, it is for us Christian men and women in our churches to inquire what the spirit of Christ, the spirit worthy of the church, demands of us in our international relations, and to try to make the mind and life of our own beloved nation comport with that demand.