

THE GROWTH OF THE CHURCH IN THE MISSION FIELD

I. AMONG THE BATAKS

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HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION

FOR fifty years the Rhenish Missionary Society has carried on mission work among the Bataks, a hill people in the interior of the island of Sumatra. The first attempt to evangelize these Bataks was made by two Englishmen, Ward and Burton, in the year 1820 ; a later attempt was made by two Americans, Munson and Lyman, in 1834. The two Englishmen, after a brief sojourn, were driven out of the country by a Mohammedan invasion ; the two Americans, in an attempt to reach the interior, were killed and eaten. In the year 1856 a Dutch missionary, Van Asselt, laboured in the southern part of Batakland, which was even then overrun by the Mohammedan propaganda, but met with small success. When the Rhenish Missionary Society, in 1861, entered on this field, I. L. Nommensen, its pioneer missionary, directed his efforts to the purely heathen districts in the north. There ensued a severe conflict between the Gospel and heathenism, which continued to present an obstinate and unbroken front. The characteristic hindrances of animistic heathenism seemed to make the reception of the Gospel an impossibility. Among these are to be reckoned the worship of ancestors, the stubborn clinging to tradition—adherence to which constitutes the essence of the animistic religion—belief in the soul as a life-substance, and the struggle of each to secure as much as possible of this life-substance at the expense of others, the deadening fatalism, and the materialistic temper which, even in the scrupulous observance of religious precepts, seek only earthly blessings. The Gospel seemed to possess nothing that could attract the materialistically minded heathen. Their one desire was to rid the land of the missionaries,

who were in constant danger of their lives among the rude cannibals, and who often owed their safety to a direct interposition of God. With great patience, strong faith, and confident hope of ultimate victory, the brave men remained at their posts. After a time some responsive souls, then families, and later whole groups, became genuine Christians. The little communities had much to suffer in their early days from the hostility of the heathen. They were looked upon as men who had committed the deepest and darkest crime—they had broken with tradition and insulted the ancestors on whose favour the welfare of men was dependent. But the brave endurance of the converts, their behaviour—which impressed even the heathen—and many proofs of the power and love of the Christian God, attracted great multitudes. The final result was that in the province of Si Lindung, the twenty thousand inhabitants of which were sunk in the most savage paganism and the darkest superstition, the impotence of heathenism was openly acknowledged, and whole villages and tribes turned to Christianity. When great numbers had been won and had made good their position, the strong family feeling and corporate sense which, in the beginning, had made it so difficult for the individual to embrace the new religion, now led the masses into its arms. The victory in this province was hardly decided when the more northern provinces around the Toba Sea, which had been closed to all foreign influences for thousands of years, were entered. This was in the year 1881. Here again there was at first a wrestling for individual souls, till gradually small communities were won. But when the Dutch Government took possession of the land and established peace, constructing roads and putting down the worst abominations, here, too, heathenism began to totter, and the number of Christians increased with such rapidity that, although there still remain thousands of heathen, the victory of Christianity in Toba is decided. During the last twenty years the Gospel has been carried northwards beyond the Toba Sea and, after experiencing greater or less difficulties at the beginning, has found an entrance into every district. The stronger and the more compact the Christian communities of the south become, the easier becomes the evangelizing of the districts which are still heathen, or in part have been affected by Mohammedan influences. The time is not far distant when all purely heathen districts will be Christian. But stubborn resistance may be expected from those tribes that have embraced Mohammedanism or been exposed to its propaganda, such as the provinces of

Mandheling and Angkola in the south, and the eastern and western coasts.

The total Batak population is estimated at between 600,000 and 700,000 souls ; 103,528 of these have been received into the Christian Church by baptism, and there are, in addition, 11,200 candidates for baptism. There are 29 ordained native preachers, 659 teachers and evangelists, and 1125 elders who serve the Church as voluntary helpers. There are 494 schools attended by 27,485 children. Missionaries have no longer any trouble in gaining admission to heathen tribes. On the contrary, they are frequently entreated to come, to erect schools, and give instruction for baptism. It is harvest-time upon a great scale.

PROBLEMS, AND THEIR SOLUTION

It is manifest that the rapid growth of the Mission and the great blessing that has attended it give rise to special problems and difficulties, which are different from, and more serious than, those which confronted the pioneers of the Mission, and which make greater demands on the wisdom and capacity of the missionaries who guide the expanding movement. The outstanding problem at the present time, and one that is comparatively new in the history of modern missions, is that created by mass movements or national conversion. Though we rejoice to see the heathen flocking into the Christian Church, we know that the motives by which they are influenced are not wholly spiritual. The great majority frankly confess that they come because their companions come. The socialism of the animist asserts itself, even where heathenism has been shattered, so that the great multitude blindly follow their leaders. What is the missionary to do in a situation of this kind ? Is he to favour or oppose the flocking of the masses into the Church ? Those who think it possible to establish in the heathen world elect communities composed exclusively of saints will, of course, view these national movements with distrust, though they will not be able to arrest them. But those who regard the Church as a divinely appointed institution for the education of all who desire to learn the way to God and the means of enjoying His fellowship, and to find mutual support against the dangers and temptations of the Christian life, will be gladdened by this religious revolution, though they will not be blind to its inherent dangers.

The chief difficulties of the missionary arise in connection with

baptism. Who ought to be baptized ? In the Batak Mission those who are willing to break utterly with heathenism are admitted to the catechumenate, *i.e.* are permitted to share in public worship and in the somewhat long course of instruction for baptism. In this time of probation and instruction they are required to give evidence of the sincerity of their purpose. If they have been faithful during the whole period of instruction for baptism, and have given evidence that they are ready to receive the blessings of the Gospel, and at the same time to fulfil the obligations which it imposes, they are baptized. Importance is attached to making the course of instruction for baptism as long as possible, since this is the best opportunity of giving those who are taught a thorough knowledge of Christianity. It is not so easy to follow up individuals once they have been received into the Church, and to exert a continuous influence upon them. Yet the great crowds of catechumens restrict to some extent the length of baptismal instruction. It is impossible for the missionaries to give the whole of the instruction themselves ; in many instances they must lay the burden on the shoulders of native helpers, and in out-stations depend upon their judgment in admitting candidates to baptism. If all native helpers were men full of the Spirit, this would be an ideal method. Unfortunately, this is not always the case, and mistakes are made, which, in the circumstances, are inevitable.

In a mass movement towards Christianity a momentous question presents itself as to how the Christian community can be built up and trained in fruitful service. It is no longer possible for the missionary to exert the same influence on individuals as in the early days when he stood in a patriarchal relation to a small community, and yet, in this period, when inferior elements are crowding in, such influence is of more importance than ever. The task of preaching to the Christian community is a more responsible and more difficult one even than that of preaching to the heathen. The latter involves the intelligible and life-giving presentation of the essential truths of Christianity, on the basis of a thorough knowledge of the people. But when the Church is at the stage of rapid and continuous growth, the demands on the preacher are more varied. The catechetical method adapted to a small community is no longer practicable ; it is less easy to be certain how far the preacher is understood, and the mass of hearers is perhaps less interested and is averse to any profound disturbance of the inner life. While at first there was

little need for Christian literature, and such as existed was sufficiently met by the translation of Bible stories and of the New Testament, and by the provision of small collections of hymns, a more copious Christian literature is now required to help the members of the Church in their Christian life. It was therefore found wise to follow up this translation of the Scriptures with tracts for those who had been baptized and confirmed, papers on the training of children, and a translation of Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*. The Mission also provided select passages for candidates for baptism, simple expositions of books of the Bible, edifying and instructive articles in a Christian Batak magazine that has existed for twenty years, and finally a school literature, which was urgently needed in view of the increasing school system. Unfortunately, the need for reading is not yet so keenly felt among the Christians as one would desire. It is therefore all the more necessary that pastoral work—Bible classes, devotional meetings, young men's and young women's associations, elders' meetings, and other similar methods—should be employed to deepen the Christian life of the Church.

The conversion of large masses to Christianity, when the number of missionaries is limited, gives rise to the difficult practical problem of teaching the whole of the Christians and heathen within the sphere of the mission stations. In this matter the Batak Mission has been guided along sound lines. Nommensen saw clearly from the first that the native Christian was the best missionary, and therefore he and his colleagues set themselves deliberately to train the converts to work among both Christians and heathen, and to become teachers in the schools. From the beginning almost every member of the native Church felt the need of helping in some way, the more mature undertaking the guidance and instruction of those less advanced, and nearly all being eager to sacrifice time and strength to winning their heathen neighbours. The decisive question in the early days was whether people could be found who were capable of helping, and whether there were latent in the community gifts that could be used in the service of the Church. It was necessary that the missionaries should have not only the faith to work with imperfect instruments, but sufficient knowledge of men to enable them to select the right agents, and assign them the work for which they were fitted. In my judgment the Batak Mission contrasts favourably with the home Church in its extensive use of laymen in the service of the Church. Those who were fitted for the service

of others were solemnly ordained to the office of elder in the Church, and regulations for the exercise of this office were carefully laid down. The missionaries devoted themselves patiently and faithfully to the training of those set apart for this office, and we can testify that a special blessing has rested on the humble labours of these elders among both heathen and Christians. Having in view the influence of the family among the Bataks, the missionaries took pains not only to influence and win the chiefs, as the heads of families and tribes, but to give them a place in the organization of the Church corresponding to their position. As heathen, these men ranked as the priests of the people in the worship of ancestors, which constitutes the kernel of the Indonesian religion, and it was therefore wise on the part of the missionaries to assign them, when converted, special functions in the organization of the Church. They were invested with responsibility in matters of Church government and Church discipline, in the settling of quarrels among Christians, in the fixing of Church rates, and the erection of Church buildings. The elders and the chiefs—the latter, of course, only so far as they are real Christians—are thus the chief pillars in the organization of the Batak Church.

It was clearly necessary, however, to supplement these voluntary workers with native agents specially set apart for the work of the Church. A few years after the beginning of the Mission a small training college for Batak teachers was opened. This grew beyond all expectation. The five students with which the institution began soon grew to thirty, then to sixty, then to one hundred and twenty, and to-day one hundred and fifty students are being trained in two training colleges. Ten years after the opening of the training college a further important step was taken in beginning the training of a Batak ministry, and this also met with such success that it was found possible to carry forward the course of training with only occasional interruptions. Altogether thirty-three native ministers have been trained. The practical plan has been adopted of selecting from the ranks of the teachers those deemed to be best fitted for the ministry, and giving them a two years' course of theological instruction. Their wives also receive a corresponding training. This body of teachers and preachers has been an unspeakable blessing to the Batak Mission. While there are to be found among them a small number who are not suitable for the work, and have been a source of trouble to the Mission, the positive work that has been accomplished is a rich

compensation. The native workers have multiplied the influence of the missionary and extended the range of his action.

The nature of the training to be given to these workers constitutes a difficult problem. A mistake was made at the beginning in attempting to burden them with too much European learning. More and more the teaching has been limited to those things which are of value for their own development, and for the discharge of their future calling. Since the Bataks are an intelligent people, a good deal may be expected from the training colleges. The course of training for teachers is four years, and two additional years are required for preachers. In judging of their attainments we must, of course, take into consideration the limitations imposed by the national character and the short time for development, and we must not expect ripe fruit where for the present there can only be blossom. The Batak Mission unquestionably owes much of its success to its native teachers and preachers. In so far as they can be imbued with the true Christian spirit, the watchword may be accepted—"The Christianizing of Sumatra by Christian Sumatrians."

The abundant supply of native workers made it possible to cover the country with a network of out-stations. There are at present four hundred and thirty-two of these grouped around the forty-one main stations. Some are close to the chief stations, while others are several days' journey distant. In these native teachers and preachers work in comparative independence, under the superintendence, of course, of a missionary, who visits them regularly, and gathers them together every week or every month to give them further instruction. If there is no native minister at an out-station, the teacher conducts public worship on Sunday, preaches, teaches candidates for baptism and confirmation, attends the sick, and discharges the duties of a pastor. The widespread system of out-stations, while it imposes heavy burdens on the missionaries, is of advantage to the Mission in enabling it to provide regular services for the people outside the more populous valleys, who are widely scattered on the steppes and in the primeval forests.

The mass movements towards Christianity have compelled the Mission to attach more importance to the extension of its system of schools than it would otherwise have done. For it is obvious that when a national movement towards Christianity is in process, it is a vital issue to train up a generation Christian in thought and conduct. The elementary schools are being attended in increasing

numbers by girls, though at first this was a matter of some difficulty. During the last twenty years the Rhenish Missionary Society has sent out deaconesses to take special charge of work among women. They manage the girls' schools, teach and give Bible lessons to married and unmarried women, and try in every way to further the development of their own sex. The building up of this extensive system, with its four hundred and ninety-four public schools, two training colleges, a technical school, and a so-called Dutch school, could not have been carried out without the generous support of the Dutch Colonial Government, which made a yearly grant to the schools of eighty thousand florins, and thereby enabled the Mission, which was not well supplied with funds, to erect good schools, keep them in repair, and supplement the small salaries of the teachers, which are all that the native congregations in their poverty can provide. The congregations must, however, learn to get rid of all subsidies. The stage has not yet been reached when all Christian children are in regular attendance at school, though the majority do attend. It has been decided that all Christian children should attend the confirmation class for one or two years; this secures that even those who have not passed through the schools are not left without some knowledge of Christian truth. In the Christianized districts of Si Lindung and Southern Toba, the school attendance is good. Special importance is attached, as might be expected, to instruction in Bible history and the Catechism, as a means of forming Christian character; but the standard in elementary subjects is always rising, especially since the students at the training colleges are receiving instruction in the subject of method. In addition to the day schools Sunday schools exist in connection with every congregation, and receive careful attention. Singing, for which the Bataks have a great gift, is a strong attraction. Occasionally a singing competition takes place between different schools, when the children sing duets and quartettes unweariedly for hours. For children who attend the day schools, and at a later period public worship, the Sunday school has not, of course, the importance which it has in a country where religion is not taught in the schools. The vast school system necessitates the careful training of a large number of native helpers. In the future the two training colleges will hardly be able to meet the demand for teachers.

The most serious problem of the period of mass movements is

probably that of organization. It is of the first importance that the flowing tide should be directed into the proper channels, and that a healthy development of all vital germs and forces should be made possible. The problem will be rightly solved only as the missionaries seek for forms suited to the character of the people ; they must not, even if it be involuntarily and unintentionally, try to copy the Church ideals with which they are familiar in the West. Under the guidance of God a Batak Church has arisen, the forms of which are not indeed ideal, but on the whole seem to be adapted to the distinctive character of the Indonesian people, and at the same time allow for the necessity of European guidance, which must continue for a considerable period. The social life of the Indonesian is built upon the family, and upon the tribe, which is the extension of the family. This characteristic feature has been recognized, as has already been indicated, by the institution of the eldership and the inclusion of the chiefs in the organization of the Church. While the missionaries, in virtue of their more mature Christian experience, must continue to inspire the organization with life, they must none the less endeavour to retreat as much as possible into the background, and to lay responsibility on the members of the Church. It would be altogether premature at the present time to give the native Christians too much independence, *e.g.*, to allow them to choose their pastors, have the determining voice in the synods, keep full control of the accounts, and settle questions of principle. A cannibal people cannot, within a generation or two, out of its own inner resources inspire a Church organization with life.

The smallest unit in the organization is the individual congregation, in which the council of elders and chiefs, together with the teachers, under the superintendence of the missionary, is responsible for the management, and determines all questions that may arise. The council system is extended to provincial synods, the elders and chiefs meeting as one body, and the teachers and preachers as another. Side by side with these, and for the time being superior to them, is the synod of missionaries. The whole organization culminates in a yearly conference of missionaries, to which the native synods submit their proposals. At the head of the general synod is a president appointed by the Rhenish Missionary Society, subordinate to whom are district presidents. The native synods as yet possess little importance, though it may be hoped that, when they

have outgrown their restricted ideas, and gained a conception of the whole with its needs and tasks, the real responsibility of Church government will pass more and more into their hands. There need be no surprise that that stage has not yet been fully reached.

While in the initial period of the mission the individual congregation sought, as best it could, for suitable forms to express its life, and the influence of the missionary in charge remained the determining factor, the time has now come when uniformity is necessary in the regulation of all matters affecting Church life. The synods have for a number of years been trying to work out a constitution for the Church that will be of general application and adapted to existing needs. They have prepared regulations regarding baptism, specifying the course and character of baptismal instruction, the principles of admission to baptism, the duties of godparents, etc. ; regulations regarding matrimony, with regard to which many complicated questions had to be settled ;¹ rules for confirmation, for Church discipline, for settlement of Church rates, for the conduct of Christian festivals, forms of public worship, school regulations, and other matters of a similar kind. In a national Church there must be uniform procedure in such matters, and both missionaries and congregations must subordinate their personal preferences in the interests of the whole. The situation in Sumatra is comparatively simple, because there is practically only one large missionary society at work in the country.

A further problem of great complexity and importance arises from the necessity of discovering the principles which should govern the attitude of the Christians to native customs and institutions. Only a thorough and exact knowledge of the people and of the conditions of their life, and a fine psychological understanding of the influence of the Gospel upon the heathen heart, can lead to a true solution of such questions as, how far particular customs may be allowed to continue, how far they are to be tolerated during a transition period, and how far they are to be condemned absolutely. The Rhenish Mission has stood for the principle that every native custom which is not directly contrary to the Christian spirit should be allowed to continue in order that all unnecessary conflict with popular

¹ The custom of the purchase of a wife, which is not an unmixed evil in view of the social conditions, has in the meantime been allowed to continue in the hope that when the ideal of marriage has been raised this shortcoming will be done away by the people themselves.

feeling may be avoided, and the way to Christ, already difficult enough, may not be needlessly encumbered. In particular instances a decision is often very difficult. For example, Is the custom of wife purchase to be tolerated? Should a converted polygamist be required to leave wives who have borne him children? Should the filing of teeth be prohibited as a heathen custom? Must all converts give up the popular heathen music? Should Christians be forbidden to give the presents that each family is expected to contribute at tribal festivals? A European will often be inclined to judge severely. There is the opportunity now of determining the direction for decades, perhaps for centuries, ahead. It is still possible to root out completely the remains of heathen ideas and customs. In one way or another the people itself, as it becomes Christian, must determine its attitude towards this its ancestral inheritance; the threads which connect the people with the past must not be cut by rude hands. We do not want Europeanized but Batak Christians, who will continue to be in every respect members of their own people, so that their Christianity will be something distinctive and original.

It is therefore a matter of the first importance to create new moral standards that will lend support to the individual in the many problems of life and social intercourse with which he is confronted, and relieve him of decisions in fundamental questions for which his judgment and character are not yet sufficient. The whole life, public and private, must take on Christian forms; thus marriage and family life, the relation of chiefs to their subjects and of subjects to their chiefs, must undergo a Christian transformation. There is need also for an understanding between the missionaries and the native Church authorities with regard to wholesome Church discipline. This is necessary both for the recovery of the offender and in the interest of the Church, which is to be presented to the Lord as a pure bride and must not be defiled by gross sins in its midst.

In this period of the Christianizing of the masses the ethical problems lie heavy on the heart of the missionaries. In every community gathered out of heathenism there is apt to be a striking discrepancy between faith and conduct, and while this is so even among the first converts, whose motives are relatively the purest, it is much more marked in the period in which whole tribes press into the Church. Even where a genuine religious life gives proof that a convert has found the living God, the moral effect of the

new relation to God is often sorely lacking both in public and in private life, since this is not the root, but the slowly ripening fruit of the new life. It was not otherwise even in the apostolic Churches, as we see from the Epistles to the Corinthians. These conditions have to be reckoned with as natural and inevitable; but the relation of morality and religion becomes a problem of exceptional difficulty when the reality of the religious life itself is in many instances doubtful, that is to say, when large crowds enter the Christian Church possessing the very minimum of what constitutes Christian faith. When baptism really represents the beginning of the Christian life, and the person baptized has a living apprehension of the new birth, the slowness of moral development need cause no anxiety; but where large masses, on whom it has not been possible to exert a deep inward influence, regard baptism as merely the terminus of an irksome period of preparation, and as the goal of religious growth, the lack of moral attainment which is in itself not unnatural becomes a matter of deep concern. At the same time, the fight against moral imperfections becomes more difficult, and the support of Christian fellowship less easy for the individual to obtain, in a rapidly growing Church in which it is impossible for every weak brother to get the tender attention he needs. The main hindrances to Christian conduct are the innate defects of the people. In Sumatra these are lying, and the lack of interest in spiritual things. Among all animistic peoples whose religion consists in the observance of tradition, the sense of moral responsibility and of free will must be called into existence. This is an achievement which, under any circumstances, each individual must win for himself; among the large masses of a rapidly growing Church the struggle is carried on under most unfavourable conditions. It is important, moreover, that the goal should be reached soon after baptism, otherwise baptism is degraded to a mere ceremony of admission to the Christian Church, while the sense of the gift of God offered in baptism, and of the resulting obligations, remains unawakened.

Another of the difficult ethical problems of this responsible period is the inexorable conflict with heathenism within the Church. A superficial view might suggest that heathenism has already been overcome, since the Christians have put away everything that recalls idolatry, magic, and the fear of spirits. But a more exact knowledge of the Batak world of thought, and a more intelligent

search for the roots of heathen usages, will show that there is still abundant animistic leaven within the Church. A number of practices of a heathen character are observed at the present time, perhaps through lack of thought, such as mourning customs, rules and prohibitions of various kinds observed from time immemorial during pregnancy or after the birth of a child, at the giving of a name, and at marriages. The animistic habit of thought which conceives of the soul as a treasure that may easily be lost, and that can be recovered from the surrounding living forces by craft and violence, continues to exert a powerful influence. The obstinate persistence of heathen fatalism is still more serious. The Christian may no longer speak of this or that being decided for him by his fate; he gives the old view a Christian dress and substitutes God for fate. Underlying this, however, is the old fatalism which regards a man's destiny as determined once for all, and as unchangeable in any particular, including his moral qualities and defects. The struggle with these heathen forces must not be under-estimated. They must be thoroughly combated during this period if the thought and feeling of the people are to become Christian.

Of great importance also in this period are the least spiritual of all problems—those of finance. Even while the congregations are still small, wise missionaries will endeavour, as soon as possible, to lay on the native Christians themselves, and that in their own interest, the burden of the trifling claims which the work makes on the home funds. The problem, however, becomes a burning one in a rapidly growing native Church, since the home contributions, however much it may be desired, can no longer meet the material needs. In the Batak Mission the missionaries early and deliberately sought to set the congregations on their own feet. They gave up the idea of erecting fine church buildings with European money, and required the native Christians to build their own places of worship, however primitive these at first might be. When later on native agents were appointed, although it was not possible to arrange at once for the entire provision of their salaries by the congregations, this ideal was kept steadily before the Church, with the result that in all the larger congregations at the present day the teachers and preachers, though, of course, not the foreign missionaries, are supported by the people themselves. It was only in this way that the remarkable growth of the staff of native workers was made possible. A Church rate was introduced, which was paid in rice at the end of the harvest, and the

people were accustomed to collections on Sundays and regular contributions of a small amount. If the Batak Mission, notwithstanding all this, still receives considerable contributions from the home funds, this is due to the fact that in the north and east God has opened great opportunities for fresh expansion, which had to be taken advantage of immediately. When, as was frequently the case, a whole district threatened by Islam had to be occupied at once by missionaries and native helpers, this could naturally only be done with money from the home funds, since contributions cannot be expected from the natives except where Christian congregations have already been established.

In this connection we must not forget the generous support of the Dutch Government, which has provided for higher and lower schools, the hospital, two leper asylums, the technical school, the school for teaching Dutch, and, in addition, for the distribution of medicine to all mission stations. The Colonial Government has recently shown a readiness to be responsible for the payment of the salaries of the missionaries in the larger Christian congregations. Opinions differ whether such help, which might involve a certain obligation to the Government, should be accepted. As this is the only instance of such action in recent mission history, it must be thought out in the light of fundamental principles, and in view of all the circumstances. In any case it would be regrettable in the highest degree if the present magnificent opportunity of expansion on all sides, and of occupying heathen districts seriously threatened by an aggressive Mohammedan propaganda, were not to be taken advantage of through lack of money.

If what has been accomplished by the Batak congregations is not great measured by European standards, it should be borne in mind that the people are comparatively poor. Under the circumstances much has been attained, and the growing congregations are in a state of healthy development. With the rising standard for service in Church and school, it becomes a necessity, in the interest of the growing Church, to raise the people to a higher level of culture. This is a duty which the Mission has always clearly recognized. It has been the means of introducing many trades. As a result of Christianity, peace has been established, and many superstitious practices which injured the social life and checked the industry of the people have been put down. The Gospel teaches men to work, makes them more cleanly, constrains them to build healthier houses,

brings the different districts into closer contact with one another, and in every way helps to raise the level of culture. New standards of civilization are introduced, and new careers are made possible. Since the Dutch Government has provided good roads and administration, trade and commerce have flourished. The Mission has maintained for fifteen years a technical school, and an agricultural college will be established within the next few years. The financial problems of the Mission are closely bound up with those of economic development.

AIMS AND TASKS

The Batak Mission, in the present stage of a growing national Church, is confronted with a twofold task. On the one hand it has to deepen and spiritualize the Christian life both of the individual and of the community, and on the other to develop a carefully planned system of education with a view to securing the complete independence of the native Church. The former task has already been discussed. With the coming over of a whole people to Christianity, a mission enters upon the most responsible part of its work. The field, having been cleared of encumbrances, a solid foundation must now be laid for the great building. The missionaries are keenly conscious of their responsibility in this time of new birth. Everything in the character of the people that hinders the realization of Christian ideas must be opposed with energy and wisdom; missionaries must grudge no pains in preaching and pastoral supervision, in order that they may guide those committed to their care in the conflict with hereditary foes. At the same time, wise educators will set themselves to develop and strengthen all existing elements of good. There are many attractive features in the character of the Indonesian peoples—childlike dependence, hospitality, willingness to be taught and guided, patience and resignation in suffering, intelligence, thoughtfulness, and a marvellous power of self-control. Christianity has not come to destroy these qualities, but to ennoble them. The best missionaries learn by sad experience that the most difficult part of missionary work is preaching, if it is to have a real educative influence on the people and to establish Christians in the faith. Special meetings for different classes and different ages are of great value. It must be clearly understood, however, that a wide and true Christian influence on the masses can be exercised only through

the medium of native workers. If the missionary were to regard the care of individual souls as his main task, he would soon be worn out, and his work would be merely temporary and incidental, since he could not reach the whole population, and must be content with scattering a grain of seed here and there. The education of a Christianized nation can be effected only by the education of its leaders, the elders, chiefs, teachers, and ministers. To these the missionary must devote all his strength and attention.

There is no more living issue at the present day than the question whether the Mission should from the very first have aimed at making the native Churches independent. It is important that the aim should not be confounded with the result. The setting of an aim does not mean that it is to be reached in one generation. But the whole work of educating the individual and the nation can be undertaken in a systematic way, when once an aim has been clearly set. Independence must be developed in three directions—self-support (*selbstunterhaltung*), self-government (*selbstverwaltung*), and complete self-maintenance (*selbsterhaltung*).

Self-support means that the congregations should be financially independent, that they should meet all their own needs, the claims which Christian love imposes, and even the cost of their foreign mission work, without drawing upon European help. There are, of course, sound reasons for not allowing the native Church to provide the salaries of the foreign missionaries. Of the three aims this is the first which can be reached, and in the larger churches in Sumatra it will soon be attained.

More difficult is the training to self-government. In many questions of administration the missionaries are still the inspiring and impelling force. But they must interest the natives in all their work, not merely as coolies and servants who are given the drudgery, but as men who will one day inherit the whole work of organization. The missionary should not administer the funds of the Church, though he must still continue to exercise the ultimate control. In questions of Church discipline the missionaries should not take the initiative or have the decisive voice, but should allow the congregation, acting through its best representatives, to safeguard its own purity. St. Paul rightly blames the Church at Corinth for leaving it to him to call attention to the necessity for discipline. It would be fatal if in all questions of administration, discipline, and order, the Church were compelled to view the matter

through the eyes of the missionary, and were to say to him, as unfortunately too often happens: "Do what you like, you know best." The Christians must be trained to a sense of responsibility, and this can be done only by entrusting to them as much work and authority as their moral attainment will permit. The experience of the Batak Mission has been that when discipline is administered by the congregation, those dealt with submit more willingly and are more ready to recognize their wrongdoing than when punishment is imposed at the bidding of the missionary, in which case they are apt, in a spirit of dull fatalism, to accept it as a dispensation of providence. Self-government can be attained only in proportion as the Christian life of the members of the Church is itself deepened; it must grow out of that life. Christians who live in God's presence will acquire a vivid sense of their responsibility for the life of the Church. In this matter more than in any other the missionary has to suppress himself. In conferences and in the councils of elders missionaries must not, in spite of their greater competence, monopolize the speaking. In the infancy of a national Church a missionary must possess the qualifications of a teacher—and a wise teacher falls more and more into the background.

Finally comes the goal of complete self-maintenance, when the native Church wholly sustains its own life and propagates itself from within. The time must come when it will be able to dispense with any kind of European Christianity, when the missionaries will leave the country because their work is finished, when the native Church will undertake the selection and training of preachers and teachers, when it will provide a sound Christian literature, and when it will itself produce the men who direct its affairs. This is an ideal, I would again repeat, the realization of which still lies in the future. The missionaries of the Rhenish Society are advancing cautiously in this direction. They would regard it as premature to propose a reduction in the number of missionaries at the present time, or to put the education of the native workers into the hands of the Bataks alone. Some time must elapse before that is possible. But we must always keep in view that our object is not to drill, but to educate, not to produce imitators, but intelligent personalities with strong wills, capable of acting and judging for themselves. We must also remember that the native Church will have to take up and prosecute vigorously

missionary work among its own heathen and Mohammedan countrymen, as well as among neighbouring tribes and nations. It will discharge this missionary obligation by collecting money and sending forth its evangelists, while the congregations thus founded will in turn relieve the mother Church of this work in proportion as they attain maturity. In the Batak Mission there is a most encouraging movement towards independence in this regard, namely, the so-called Kongsî Batak—a Batak missionary society, which not only collects money, but also undertakes on its own initiative the evangelization of heathen districts, and evinces much zeal and joyfulness in the work. The Batak Christians have shown that there is nothing better calculated to awaken the instinct of independence than missionary work. We have here a sapling which must be carefully nurtured. It needed great wisdom, and in some respects great self-denial, on the part of the European missionaries to allow the natives the largest possible amount of liberty, and so to control the reins, which they had still to retain in their own hands, that those who drew the vehicle scarcely felt their pressure. The missionary work of these Christians opens up a field of great promise.

The Batak Mission teaches us that when the native Christians vigorously and systematically undertake the evangelization of their countrymen, the mission enters upon the period of large results, for it is only through the native missionary that heathenism can be overcome on a large scale. The European remains a foreigner to the heathen, even when he has gained their confidence, and it seems quite natural to them that he should have a better, and it may be a more vigorous, religion. On the other hand, the very existence of the native missionary is an impressive sermon to the heathen. Around him an indigenous Christianity can crystallize more easily than around the missionary. We do not think that it would be going too far to express the hope that the Christianization of the Mohammedan Indonesian world, the approach to which is still very difficult, will be carried out for the most part by Indonesian Christians. The success of the Batak Mission in the south (Angkola) among Mohammedans, where nearly eight thousand converts have been won—a result that has few parallels among missions to Mohammedans—must be ascribed undoubtedly, for the most part, to the fact that the Batak Christians in the north exert a powerful influence on the Mohammedan districts, partly through direct

missionary activity, which they carry on with enthusiasm and conviction, partly through their Christian behaviour, and most of all, perhaps, by the impression which the compact Christian community of the north makes upon its Mohammedan fellow-countrymen in the south. Here, then, are to be found important tasks for a Batak Christian Church. It must be admitted that the Indonesian character, with its indolence, its lack of energy and initiative, its preference for being driven and governed rather than pursuing its own path with independent judgment to a definite goal, puts many serious obstacles in the way of a development towards independence. The question how far Christianity will remove these defects of the native character cannot yet, with the experience of only a single generation, be answered. At any rate, a change will come only when there has been a long succession of genuinely Christian individuals transformed by the living forces of the Gospel to counter-balance the inherited dead-weight of heathenism. This necessity lays a heavy responsibility on the Christian Church in its present period of transition. The character which that Church will bear is unavoidably being impressed upon it to-day.

LESSONS FOR THE CHURCH AND MISSION

The development of the Batak Mission shows, with the convincing power that lies in historical facts, that the ultimate issue of the work of modern missions is the Christianizing of an entire people. This was not the original intention of the missionaries, and even at the present time it is not viewed with favour by many who would rather see small congregations of true believers. But it is impossible to hold back the stream of history. We can exercise caution in the acceptance of candidates for baptism. We can try to moderate the dominant fashion which drives people into the Church. But it is impossible for us to prevent large masses of the population pressing forward for baptism; and if they are ready to break with idolatry, and, according to the measure of their knowledge, to lead a Christian life, we are bound to accept them, even when our eyes are open to the dangers that threaten the purity of the Church, and when we suspect that there are tares among the wheat. Movements of this kind may also teach us to regard the much criticized missionary labours of the Middle Ages in a more favourable light. Without attempting to excuse the defects of that period, we must

acknowledge that it is equally true of the peoples of Europe that a process of historical development irresistibly impelled whole communities towards conversion to Christianity, with the unfortunate result of making the process of conversion too easy for the individual, and depriving him of the need for personal decision. Nevertheless it is a great epoch in the life of a people when as a nation it breaks with idolatry and turns to worship the living and true God. While all who share in such an experience may not reach a full personal faith, the path to Christ is made easier for the individual, and the victory of Christian ideas in the national life brings with it many blessings in which all participate.

Since we may anticipate that this time will come in all mission fields, it is the obvious duty of a mission to take steps in good time to provide a staff of competent native workers, so that later, when a mass movement suddenly begins, there may be leaders who can guide the stream into the right channels. The experience of the Batak Mission shows how wholesome it is, both for the inner development and the outward expansion of Christianity, that the forces latent in the Church, including the laity, should, to the utmost extent possible, be enlisted in the service of the Church. Even in the most primitive people there are far greater capacities and gifts than one is inclined at first to suppose. The Church itself is quickened and strengthened when many of its members have in one way or another a share in the common work. The ideal would be that every Christian should have laid on him some definite duty. It is the duty of missionaries, therefore, from the beginning to secure the willing co-operation of the natives, and they ought under no circumstances to do themselves any work that they can depute to others. Apart from the fact that for many kinds of work the native Christians are actually better suited than the foreign missionary, the latter confers on his converts the greatest privilege when he enlists them in useful activities, and thereby compels them to develop the talents which they possess. The missionary has to be on his guard against forming an exaggerated estimate of his own importance and undervaluing the capacities of the native Christians and their possibilities of development.

It follows that movements towards independence, which arise naturally and inevitably out of the growing spiritual life, and are an evidence that the new life is beginning to find effective expression, should not be undervalued, and still less suppressed. When they

make their appearance in the mission field they should be welcomed with joy, even when immaturity of judgment leads occasionally to extravagances, and the growing-pains of adolescence make their appearance. The object of the missionary is to educate the Church to independence by allowing sufficient scope for the will and action of individuals. Indeed, it is one of the noblest fruits of Christianity that in the languid animistic peoples it develops the impulse to will and to act for themselves.

From the very moment that converts are made, they must be trained to self-support. Anything is better than erecting churches with European money, or presenting the native Church with showy places of worship built in a foreign style. These are as little valued as presentation copies of books. The most primitive bamboo shed which converts have built themselves, is of greater value for the healthy growth of the Church than a magnificent Gothic cathedral which is the gift of friends in Europe. The Christians have to learn that, even though they are poor and few in number, they are responsible for the support of those who work among them. In their heathen days their religious practices, their ancestor feasts, their sacrifices, and the contributions made to sorcerers imposed heavy burdens upon them. It only increases the value of the new religion in the eyes both of Christians and heathen when it demands from them real sacrifices. Gratitude for the blessings received must express itself in this way. It is reprehensible under any circumstances to pamper the new converts by presents, or to attract children to attend school by gifts. What is learned in youth is practised in later life.

Both in the period of individual conversions and opening doors, and at the stage of mass movements, mission schools are indispensable and invaluable. In heathen districts they become the means of opening doors otherwise closed, and in Christianized areas they are the best means of initiating the people in a knowledge of Christianity, and of the new obligations which it imposes. It is therefore indispensable that the mission staff should include thoroughly trained educators, and that in missionary institutions pedagogy and the subjects related to it should be thoroughly taught. Few are born teachers, especially when the task in question is the education of a whole people. The art of teaching must be systematically learned by the careful use of the results of the labours of others.

Again, there must be no mechanical transplantation of European forms, whether it be in doctrine, worship, or organization. Missionaries must have the most tender regard for the thought and feeling of the people among whom they labour. This necessity is imperative, and obvious in preaching to the heathen, but even pastoral preaching fails in its object so long as it moves within the circle of European forms of thought. Just because growth in knowledge is so important, Christian truth must be worked out afresh for each people, with direct reference to its past history, to its present needs, and to the particular problems of knowledge and life that cause perplexity. Similarly in Church architecture, in music, and in art, the missionary must refrain from forcing his own ideals upon the people.

During this period of Church development it is the sacred duty of pastors and preachers to deal in the most thorough way with ethical questions. The new converts, transplanted into a whole new world of thought and life, are in urgent need of wise guides to lead them through the labyrinth and to tell them what they should avoid and what they should do. The Bataks are readily inclined to ignore the ethical consequences of the new relation to God. In this critical period a clearly defined Christian code of morals, a national Christian conscience, and a strong public opinion capable of influencing the national life, must be created. This is impossible, however, without systematic instruction regarding the duties of the Christian life, which both goes into practical details and seeks to illuminate the new relations by the light of large and governing ideas.

Another pressing need is the provision of good Christian literature. The first requirement is translations of Bible stories, the Catechism, Christian hymns, and ultimately the whole of the New and the Old Testaments. But, in addition to these, the people must be provided with books that are not translations of the literature of Christian Europe, which has been written with wholly different presuppositions. Books must be prepared specially adapted to the purpose in view, taking into account the mental capacity of the readers, based on a thorough knowledge of the people, of their world of thought, of their needs and deficiencies, and dealing with the questions that are actually agitating their minds. A growing national Church without a popular Christian literature, and without a wide circle of Christians who diligently read this literature and profit by it, is without the means of sustaining its own life. As soon as possible

the more experienced Christians must be enlisted in the work of producing Christian literature. Once their eyes have been opened to a real understanding of what is required, they are likely to do more useful work than the missionaries themselves, whose efforts to steep themselves in the thought of a foreign people must always have in them something artificial.

In the prosecution of all these tasks unnatural forcing must be avoided, and aims must not be confounded with results. In the endeavour to train the Church to independence it must be borne in mind that the process is one of education, in which the end must not be prematurely grasped, but gradually approached, sometimes, it may be, by indirect roads. More must not be laid on the native workers than they are able to carry. Missionaries must not withdraw from mission stations too soon. Foreign supervision must not be surrendered, though it may be exercised in such a way as to attract as little attention as possible. The natives are easy-going in money matters, and it is absolutely necessary that the missionaries should exercise some control over the funds. The remains of the old leaven must not be ignored, and native Christians should not be regarded as more spiritual than they are in reality. Carelessness in any of these matters may have a ruinous effect lasting for decades. Every man needs to subject his own work to the most thorough tests.

Along with all this, however, the experience of the Batak Mission teaches that however important the edification of converts, and however pressing the duty of concentrating one's whole strength on work of an intensive character, God is at the same time impelling the Mission to further expansion. The greater the tasks which confront a growing national Church, the stronger and healthier is the pulse of its life, and this is no less true when these tasks include missionary expansion. It is in the impelling necessity for advance, and in the presence of divinely appointed tasks in neighbouring heathen and Mohammedan districts, that the Church finds its greatest blessings. In view of what lies before it the Church is compelled to put forth all its powers, and indolent repose becomes impossible. Just as in our personal experience it is often the times that are most crowded with duties that are the most rich and fruitful for our spiritual life, so is it also in the life of the Church. The more far-reaching the tasks to be accomplished, the greater is the exercise of the muscles. No time is left for plotting evil devices or finding a place for heathen practices within the Church. The conflict with the

heathenism round about reveals to the Church the danger of the heathen leaven, and makes those who might readily forget thankful for the blessings that they have received. In the Church in the mission field, as in the Church at home, the crowding claims of home and foreign missions compel the Church to concentrate all its powers and preserve it from stagnation.

The experience of the Batak Mission demonstrates with overwhelming clearness that the supreme need is of well-trained, unselfish, self-denying, and wise missionaries, filled with the Spirit of God¹, who not only possess courage, but at the same time are ready to learn everything that a man can learn from the history of the Church and of missions, from psychology and anthropology, from theory and from practical experience. Only such missionaries are capable of studying sympathetically the people among whom they work; only such can see the special hindrances which stand in the way of an acceptance of Christianity, and the peculiar dangers which threaten the development of the Christian Church from heathenism and from the national character. Men are needed who, under the guidance of God, will set before themselves high aims and pursue these aims with wisdom; and who at the same time have the power to wait, and amid the triviality of their daily life never lose sight of the goal towards which they strive—men who continually view their work, however paltry and irksome its details often appear, from the standpoint of great ideals. They need to be aware that in their relation to national movements towards Christianity they are not merely witnessing, but sharing in, the making of Church history. The chief deficits of missionary societies are not in money but in men. May God give to our missions great, wise, strenuous, Spirit-filled men and women. This is the greatest need of missionary work at the present day.