

# The Pastor and Modern Missions

## A Plea for Leadership in World Evangelization

■ Will lack of home church support be the Achilles' heel in the push for "A Church for Every People by the Year 2000"? What is the key to gaining local church backing for new ventures and existing mission work that is spawning Two-Thirds world missionaries? Take another look at the crucial role of the pastor. Are we effectively training pastors so that they possess and spread mission vision?

By John R. Mott

*Editor's note: The editor enjoyed finding a special book in the possession of Professor Walt Baker of Dallas Theological Seminary. From his own library, the late George W. Peters had given the volume to Baker, whom Peters groomed to carry on in the missions department of the seminary. Though dated 89 years ago, the words of John R. Mott have astounding relevance yet today. Along with Mott, the editor believes that the leadership of pastors is crucial to finishing the job of world evangelization. Pastors and other church leaders in every generation must be awakened to their God-given responsibility to promote, support and lead in world missions. Any serious closure strategy must include plans for mobilizing local churches to provide the needed manpower, finances and prayer. If the local church is to be mobilized, the leadership of the pastor must be sought and won. Read Mott's words and ponder anew the need to train pastors for world evangelization.—RAC*

### Mott's Thesis

The primary work of the Church is to make Jesus Christ known and obeyed and loved throughout the world. By far the larger part of this undertaking is among the non-Christian nations. The world's principal events in recent years have combined to make possible a more rapid and more effective prosecution of the campaign of evangelization.... The secret of enabling the home Church to press her advantage in the non-Christian world is one of leadership. The people do not go beyond their leaders in knowledge and zeal, nor surpass them in consecration and sacrifice. The Christian pastor, minister, rector—whatever he may be denominated—holds the divinely appointed office for inspiring and guiding the thought and activities of the Church. By virtue of his position he can be a mighty force in the world's evangelization....

### Threats to Mission Advance —On the Field

#### *Understaffing*

...First, look at some of the dangers which will be experienced on the foreign field. One is that many of the missionaries will be broken down, unless reinforcements are sent speedily. The pressure upon them as a result of the marvelous successes of recent years and of the intensified conflict is more than they can endure. I have visited very few missionary stations during the past ten years in which I did not receive the impression that the field is undermanned and the force of foreign workers is overworked.

#### *Discouragement*

There is the danger that the missionaries and native workers may become discouraged and depressed, because, through want of adequate backing from the home Church, they are obliged to stand before wide-open doors and be unable to enter them—to confront ripe harvest fields and be unable to reap.

#### *Reversion*

There is the danger also that multitudes of those who are practically ready to attach themselves to Christ may lapse. Their last state would thus be worse than the first. It would become increasingly difficult to reawaken them, and they in turn would be stumbling-blocks in the way of a subsequent work of God.

#### *Delay*

We must not forget that by failing to advance now when there are so many favoring circumstances we are deferring the world's evangelization beyond our own day, are seriously mortgaging the future, and are hindering the achievements of our successors. The secret of victory, Napoleon said, is to bring up the reserves when the struggle is at its crisis.

### Threats to Mission Advance —At Home

#### *Atrophy*

What are some of the perils to the Church at home? All men need Christ. We have Christ. We owe Christ to all men. To know our duty and to do it not is sin. Continuance in the sin of neglect necessarily weakens the life and arrests the growth. To fail to do our duty then with reference to the peculiar opportunity of our generation means the promotion of spiritual atrophy.

#### *Hypocrisy*

Another peril is wide-spread hypocrisy. If our Gospel is the truth we are under obligation to propagate it. If it is not the truth we ought to forsake it. To attempt to occupy middle ground is not simply inconsistency but is the most dangerous form of hypocrisy. It damages the character of all those who permit themselves to hold such a position. It destroys confidence in religion on the part of those who observe their lives. And it condemns to outer darkness multitudes of those in foreign lands who, but for the sham profession of such Christians, might be ushered into the light of Christ.

#### *Complacency*

The danger is greater now than ever before in the history of the Church, that Christians yield to luxury, selfishness, slothfulness, and low ideals. Never so much as today has the Church needed great tasks to call out and exercise all her energies and to save her from paralyzing weakness. "What we now need to discover in the social realm is the moral equivalent of war: something heroic that will speak to men as universally as war does, and yet will be as compatible with their spiritual selves as war has proved itself to be incompatible."

### Key to Mission Advance—Greater Home Church Support

#### *The Home Church Will Benefit*

Furthermore, the Church will not have the power she ought to have in order to deal successfully with the problems on the home field, unless she does far more for the foreign field. Nothing better could happen in the interest of the schemes for the evangelization of our home cities and in the interest of meeting the spiritual need of our rural districts than for the Church to put forth greater exertions than ever on behalf of non-Christian lands. In hitting blows hard enough to impress the Far East or mid-Africa, we most certainly develop greater energies with which to do the tasks at our very doors. The history of the Church teaches clearly and conclusively that the missionary epochs have been the times when the home Church has been most powerfully stimulated.

#### *The Holy Spirit Will Bless*

The most serious of all the perils of the Church at home, resulting from the failure to enter doors of opportunity, is that the largest manifestation of the Spirit of Jesus Christ is withheld from those who do not wholly obey. Therefore, if we would have the irresistible current of the energy of God coursing through the Church in her work both home and abroad, let us follow with more purpose of heart the pathway of obedience to the missionary command of Christ.

#### *Now Is The Time*

In view of the conditions in the non-Christian world at the beginning of this century, favoring and calling for a great advance movement on the part of the churches of Christendom, in view of the grave dangers resulting from any save an aggressive onward movement, has not the time come for the Church to give herself with greater earnestness than ever to the stupendous task of making Christ known and obeyed in all the world?

#### *The Key to Mission Advance*

What can prevent such a great onward movement for the evangelization of the world at the beginning of this century? Not the obstacles on the foreign mission field. If there be any failure, it will not be because the fortresses in the non-Christian world are impregnable, but because the attack by our

missionary forces is not adequately sustained by the home churches. Granted the earnest and persevering support of the Christians on the home field, our missionary forces will triumphantly override every obstacle in Asia, Africa, and all other parts of the unevangelized world.

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### Key to Greater Home Church Support—The Pastor

The real problem of foreign missions, then, is in the home churches, and without the pastor it can not be solved. "The weak spot in missions today," says Dr. Theodore T. Munger, "is not in the field, ...nor in the administration of the Board, nor in the pews, but it is in the pulpit." Professor Christlieb asks: "Whence the great difference of interest in missions often in one and the same province? I answer, chiefly from the difference of the position taken by the clergy is this matter." At those times when the Church made her greater missionary advances, the pastors were putting forth their whole strength in the effort to extend her sway. So, too, when there have been periods of neglect and indifference concerning the world-wide plans of Christ, the pastors have been showing a lack of enthusiasm on the subject. It is not a question of the location of the pastor or of his special natural ability. Wherever you find a pastor with overflowing missionary zeal and knowledge, you will find an earnest missionary church.

#### *Influencer*

The pastor's position gives him authority; his character and work give him vast influence. The pastor is the educator of the church. There is no other way to get the ear of the whole church save through him. It can not be done through the women's missionary society, or the young people's society, or the Sunday-school. He has direct and influential access to all the members. Any idea which he persistently

preaches and prays for in the pulpit will be gradually accepted as a rule of conduct by the people.

#### *Example*

The pastor is an exemplar as well as teacher. Dr. R.P. Mackay of Canada has well said: "Whatever the Lord Jesus wants the people to know or believe, the pastor ought to know and believe.... Whatever the Lord wants the people to do, the pastor ought to do." He must preach what he believes and must practice what he preaches, or he will work without power deeply to move the people. It is this note of reality which makes one's life and words truly communicative.

#### *Leader*

The pastor is the director general of the Christian forces. He should regard his church not alone as a field to be cultivated, but also and more especially as a force to be wielded on behalf of the evangelization of the world. He is responsible not only to care for the souls of his parishioners, but also to direct their activities. What is an army without a leader? But the leader must himself know the way, must keep ahead, and must get others to follow as a result of his own courageous spirit and contagious earnestness.

#### *Advocate*

The pastor is not only a leader of his members at home, but an advocate for the people abroad. If he does not plead their cause, who will? The multitudes of the distant nations cannot come to speak for themselves, even were they conscious of their need. Nor can the missionary do so. The missionary visitor may arouse temporary interest. But it is the missionary pastor who makes a church a missionary power the year through.

#### *Ambassador*

Above all, the pastor is an ambassador. He represents Jesus Christ. A pastor who does not have a deep interest in the world-program of Christ and earnestly promote it, is untrue to his credentials and instructions, for an ambassador represents his sovereign. What a responsibility rests upon the representative of such a Sovereign and of such a Kingdom! What man living accepts such grave responsibility as he who today enters or holds the pastoral office.

*Ed. Note: In the remainder of his book, Mott develops the role of the pastor's leadership as a force in world*

evangelization in the educational, financial, recruiting and spiritual spheres.

**Quotable Excerpts from the Remainder of Mott's Book**

*The Chief Purpose of the Church*

The Lambeth Conference of Bishops of the Anglican Communion declared that missions constitute the "primary work of the Church, the work for which the Church was commissioned by our Lord." This greatest movement for the social betterment and the moral and religious elevation of the world is not simply a desirable thing for the Church to carry forward, but it is her chief and most important undertaking. It is the reason for the existence of the Church, and should be made a controlling purpose in the life of each of the members. Every Christian, therefore, should be made intelligent concerning the principal work of the Church.

*Remedy for Self-Centeredness*

Each church needs something to live for apart from itself and its own local work. Nothing short of participation in the sublime undertaking of the evangelization of the world is adequate to emancipate from selfishness, and to call out the

best energies of mind and heart. How the missionary vision enlarges one's view of the world, of the Church, and of the Gospel!

*The Goal of Preaching Ministry*

[The Bible] is through and through a missionary book.... If in all our preaching we bear in mind that men are not only to be saved and built up but also they are to be enlisted as recruits for the spread of Christ's Kingdom, we shall be constantly referring to missions and imparting missionary impulses. We shall be literally leading the forces to battle.

*Exhort Every Believer to Get Involved*

One of the greatest opportunities which a pastor has for exerting a deep missionary influence on young people comes at the time when they are received into communicant membership in the church. In receiving them on that serious and impressive occasion let him emphasize the fact that true allegiance to Christ and His Church requires that the Christian be willing to be used in God's service anywhere He may lead and that he make his whole life tell on the evangelization of the world. Many foreign missionaries and many powerful home advocates of missions trace their life-long consecration to the cause to the faithful words of ministers

of the Gospel at the time when they entered the Christian fellowship of the Church.

*Stimulate Male Involvement*

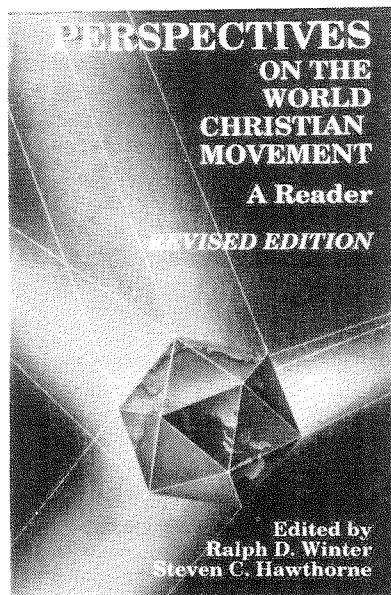
There are reasons why the subject of the world's evangelization should appeal with special force to men, and to the strongest men.... Give them work to do. If men are called on to do little or nothing, we must not be surprised to find them manifesting but feeble interest in the mission schemes of the church. That to which they give time, thought, and energy, they will learn to love and toward that they will show real enthusiasm.

*The Bottom Line: The Pastor's Passion*

The pastor must be filled with the spirit of missions.... If the pastors are on fire with the missionary passion the churches will be kindled. "For without the missionary passion they are not able ministers of the New Testament; they are disabled, deficient, half-equipped; they lack the fullness of the spirit of Christ." ■

(From John R. Mott, *The Pastor and Modern Missions: A Plea for Leadership in World Evangelization*, New York: Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions, 1904. Excerpts selected and subtitles added by the editor, Richard A. Cotton.)

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