

NEW ERA MAGAZINE



NEW ERA MAGAZINE

Continuing THE ASSEMBLY HERALD

Official Medium of the Presbyterian Church, U. S. A., Published Monthly

JAMES B. WOOTAN, *Editor*
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NEW ERA MAGAZINE

(Continuing the Assembly Herald)

Official Medium of the Presbyterian Church, U. S. A.

NOVEMBER, 1919

November— Christian Americanization

THE New Era program for November calls us to consider Christian Americanization. All our Home Mission and much of our general church work runs along this line, but it is well to specialize our attention upon it during this month. The problem is big enough to tax all our days of study and means and methods, but this is all the more reason why we should break it up into definite problems and points. There is danger that in handling so vast a subject we scatter over it everywhere and not master and lay hold of it anywhere.

Of course, our American civilization is not yet fully Christian. Though the foundations of our country were laid in faith in God and in Christ and our whole career and development have been along Christian lines, yet we have national failings and faults and sins enough to keep us humble and make us ashamed and cause us to be anxious and alarmed. We have our common human infirmities and our race problems and perils and our clashing political parties and policies and our labor turmoil and social unrest and threatening upheavals and our spirit of pride and greed, our madness for making money and seeking pleasure, and these are all heaping up and rolling in upon us like the waves of a storm-tossed sea. And the new generation is ever coming on in ignorance and exposed to temptations, and we must meet it with all the resources of our homes and schools and churches.

What can we do about these complicated and enormous and ominous things? For one thing, we can study them. The New Era program calls for "a study of our national field under the leadership of the Home Board," and for the organization of "Mission Study Classes." Courses have been mapped out and books suggested for this study, which can be obtained from the Home Board. Such knowledge must precede and underlie and guide and inspire any efficient approach to and handling of such a gigantic problem as Christian Americanization. An ignorant or superficial understanding of the work is sure to lead to false if not foolish means and methods of attempting it. All the

fads and isms of social and religious visionaries grow out of such shallow knowledge and short-sighted vision. Knowledge is power, and nowhere is it more needed than in our religious work. The study of our national problems is the only way to kindle genuine interest in them and generate power to solve them. Here is a great field of study for our people, especially our youth. America is the central splendid attraction for the eyes of all the world: why should it not be so for our own eyes? Millions in other lands are finding out all they can about America: why should not we know it? Let pastors and other church workers organize such classes and get these books and study our country: such a course will be an education for them; it will be their college and university. Many young people may be looking far off for education when they can get it right at home. This study can be made intensely interesting and popular; it will grip the imagination of people and set them on fire with the vision of our country as it is to be Americanized after the Christian ideal.

The New Era Program for this month further calls for "the application of Christian principles to the complex social and economic problems: community betterment." This means that we are not to wait for the application of our methods to the big national problem before we begin practical work, but that we are to begin right away and right at home. Christianity began at Jerusalem and then gradually worked outward in widening circles to the rim of the planet, and we are to follow the same common sense method. There is work to do in the way of community betterment right under the shadow of the home and the church, and this is the work that we are to do first and at once. Perhaps the church building needs to be repaired, or the church yard and graveyard need to be put in order, or the backyard of the home should be cleaned up, or the streets of the village or town should be put in sanitary condition: these may seem like trivial things, but they are atoms in the social blood of the community. And of course there are much deeper matters to be looked after in the schools and hospitals and jails and Y. M. C. A. rooms and in the whole social condition and welfare of the community. All these things are

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Why Should the Church Give Negro Schools?

A Dialogue

By S. J. FISHER

INQUIRER: Why does the Presbyterian Church establish schools in the South specially for your people? In the North the Negroes go to the public schools. Do not the Southern States provide such schools?

Freedman: No. There never has been in the South an interest in popular education, nor such a system of public schools, as in the North. And though it is doing now more for the white children than ever, and some states are making increased provision, comparatively little is done for the Negroes. Hundreds of thousands have no public schools.

Inquirer: But where there are public schools for the whites, why do your children not attend?

Freedman: Because it is against the law for whites and blacks to attend the same schools. It is against the law for a white teacher to have charge of a colored school.

Inquirer: But why do you Negroes not start such schools?

Freedman: Because there are very few competent Negro teachers for such schools. The few intelligent and capable teachers have been educated in the church schools. The few Negro schools are very unsatisfactory. Listen to what some school superintendents in the South say: "In scarcely one of the Southern States does the colored child receive half the educational support which goes to the white child. Negro education has never been actually tried in the South." Even in one of the best cities (Birmingham, Ala.) the *Age-Herald* says: "At the present time there are not decent accommodations for the Negro children of this city. There are not seats to accommodate one-half the number." If that is true of a progressive and prosperous city, is it strange there are so few schools in the rural regions? The North is always associated with the little country school-house. The South rarely had it. An annual report says: "The Negro school-houses are miserable beyond description. In most cases they are a serious reflection upon civilization." Mr. Weatherford says: "It is impossible to pass over in silence the fact that the Negro child in the South does not now have and never has had a fair chance for training." A Supervisor says: "There has never been any serious attempt in this state to offer adequate educational facilities for the colored race, practically all the teachers are incompetent, possessing little or no education." Another says: "Most of the

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teachers are absolutely untrained. Among the Negro rural schools which I have visited, I have found only one in which the highest class knew the multiplication table." Consider what George S. Dickerman said: "Think of it, 17,000,000 people in the South, none of whom lives in a village of 1,000 inhabitants."

Inquirer: But why do the states make no greater effort?

Freedman: Some say they have not the money. A large number of people have no sympathy with the education of my people and oppose appropriations. Therefore great numbers of Negro children never could get an education if the Church did not provide schools. And because the Presbyterian schools have competent and trained colored teachers, the people of other churches are eager to send their children to our schools, even though we teach the Catechism.

Inquirer: Are your people asked to support the schools of the Presbyterian Church?

Freedman: As far as they are able. A small weekly fee is asked, corresponding to their generally limited means. This helps to pay for the fuel in winter. And because these are church schools, religion can be taught, morals inculcated, which the state public school might not permit, and a better character and future are sought. Some persons talk of making the Southern public school a national question, the government aiding, but after all that would not give my people a religious training, and we greatly need this. It is easy to talk and criticise existing evils and say what should be done, but we confront a condition, not a theory. The Presbyterian Church was very wise when it established and spread its system of schools, reaching large and destitute regions. For all we can see its schools will long be needed and as greatly useful and as highly prized by every earnest Negro and as sincerely commended by the best southerners as they are today. Do not think of the southern Negro child as having any of the privileges and advantages which surround and await the childhood of the Negro of the North.

Inquirer: Is there no danger of different northern churches establishing schools on the same ground and crowding the same territory?

Freedman: Not a bit of danger. In the first place the schools are really few. In the second place, like the Presbyterian Board, the churches keep out of occupied territory and enter only destitute regions. Do not let any one persuade you that there is any of this imaginary competition or lack of comity. The Presbyterian board has always said it would keep entirely out of half or the whole of a state with its missions if any Christian body would truly meet the needs. Every intelligent southern Christian praises the work of the Presbyterian Church in its great effort to plant schools, and evan-

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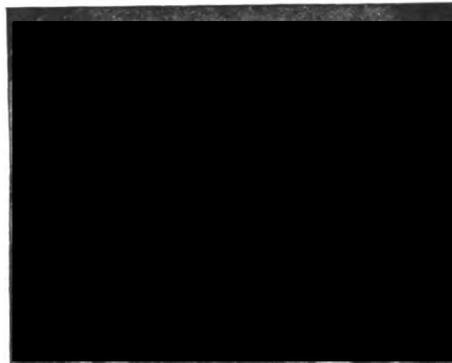
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W. H. Schureman

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A man came to one of the evening services, who informed the missionary that he had not been in church before in twenty-two years. The services have gradually grown in interest, and between five and ten dollars per Sunday is being subscribed toward the support of the minister. The school has a Cradle Roll and Home Department, whose superintendent has twin babies, and comes five miles each Sunday to attend the services.

While there is no immediate prospect of a church organization here, the Sunday-school is stabilizing the community, and paving the way for a more positive religious life in the homes that are aiding in its support.

Several of the newly accepted members of St. Anthony and Rexburg churches, Idaho, are out of Mormon families and some of them from active membership in the Mormon Church. This is very unusual. They gave as their reason for their change that the Presbyterian Church places Jesus Christ at the center of everything.

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