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“LET US PRAY”

EVERY new year is crowded with the possibilities of new dangers and of new opportunities, but the year 1922 is unusual in its outlook for a re-establishment of economic welfare and of international peace. The conference at Washington promises richer results than were generally anticipated—results in the reduction of armaments and their attendant dangers and burdens; a settlement of problems relating to China, Japan and the Pacific Ocean. The British-Irish controversy has resulted in an agreement that promises a return of peace to Ireland. There is hope for better conditions in Russia and Central Europe, in Asia Minor and Mesopotamia, in Egypt, India and Korea.

Prayer is the channel through which new wisdom and new power must come to solve the problems of the present and the future. The prayer uttered by Rev. W. S. Abernethy at the opening of the Washington Conference on Limitation of Armaments may well be voiced again by all Christians at the beginning of the new year.

“Almighty God, we thank Thee for the coming of this eventful day. We have seen it from afar and now we rejoice that it has at last dawned. May it bring untold blessing to a troubled world. O Thou Omnipotent One, today as in other days, we believe that Thou dost guide in human affairs. Thou hast made of one blood all nations that dwell upon the earth, and though we are of many races and many tongues, yet the interests of the few are the interests of the larger number. May we feel assured that the welfare and happiness and prosperity of the human family are inexpressibly dear to Thy heart. We pray for clear vision, or we shall grope blindly for the light and lose our way. We pray for hearts lovingly sympathetic to human distress wherever it may exist, or we shall sink into the depths of a miserable selfishness. We pray for minds willing to

The Confusion and Distress of China *

BY ROBERT E. SPEER

President of the Missionary Review Publishing Co.

IN crossing the Pacific on the "Empress of Asia" we had unusual opportunity to hear statements of fact and expressions of judgment with regard to present conditions in China from many of the men at work in China, both in missionary service and in other capacities. These men have the most authoritative knowledge of the situation and are most competent to express opinions regarding it. Their general attitude of mind was one of unlimited confidence and respect with regard to the Chinese people and of unqualified hopelessness regarding the present national government in Peking. This they represented to be financially, politically, and morally bankrupt. Those who know the facts authoritatively stated that the central government is now receiving no revenues whatever from the provinces.

During the Taiping Rebellion, seventy years ago, the revenues from the Yangtse valley and Southern China were cut off, but now Peking is receiving practically nothing from anywhere. The government schools including the ambitious and hopeful university in Peking are closed, the teachers have received no pay since last October. No money is going to the Chinese ministers abroad, who in consequence are obliged to support themselves, and one of them has had to mortgage his home in Tien Tsin in order to maintain his legation. The receipts from foreign customs and salt taxes have been mortgaged to pay the interest on the foreign debt, and much of this is now in arrears.

In 1918 China borrowed from Japan \$150,000,000 gold, all of it ostensibly under government obligations which cannot be repudiated. One half of this, however, was unsecured and both capital and interest are now long overdue to Japanese banks. None of this money has been of benefit to China. Much of it has been stolen by the three members of the cabinet who were forced out by the uprising of the students supported by Chinese public opinion. The thieves carried their plunder with them and are now building great harems in Peking. There is no public sentiment in China to recover the loot and to enforce the punishment of these men. On the other hand corruption in office is more flagrant and more excessive than it was even under the Manchus.

The real government of the nation, it was recognized in these conferences on the "Empress," is in the hands of the three great military lords who in spite of the presence in the cabinet of a few

*A second letter written to the readers of the REVIEW on board S. S. Dilwara in the China Sea, September 16, 1921, and mailed at Singapore. Another letter on "The Shifting Thought of Japan" appeared in December.

good men like Dr. Yen, the minister of Foreign Affairs, gave orders to the president and the government and were obeyed. A good part of the money which Peking borrowed and what revenues it might now expect from Northern China have been absorbed by these three men for their own profit or for the support of their harmful armies. Only a few weeks ago these three, Chang Tso Lin, the high commissioner of Manchuria, Tsao Kun, the military governor of Chih-li province, and Wang Chan Yuan, military governor of Hupeh province, summoned the Prime Minister to Tien Tsin and gave him their orders as though they were China. Later, while we were in China, it was reported that Chang Tso Lin after having received more than four million dollars for work that he was appointed to do as high commissioner of Mongolia coolly pocketed the money and resigned the commission. No one had a good word to say for any member of this triumvirate. Though they held China in their control, they were believed to be destitute of any idea of patriotism or any ideal of true progress for China.

Men from many different provinces who were on board the "Empress" lamented that they could say nothing more hopeful regarding their own provinces, even such great and self-contained provinces as Sz-chuen, than has been said of the national government. There were a few exceptions.

For this black plight of China the man who knew the national situation best and who was not a missionary said that he saw only three paths of escape. The first is *international intervention*, which some allege Japan is seeking secretly to bring about in the conviction that America might be brought to assent to it. Then in accordance with her policy of self-absorption it is thought that America would leave the actual control of affairs in China to Japan. We were interested to discover in Japan however, that the Japanese papers were attributing this policy to America and especially to Mr. Hoover, and were strongly opposing it, as assuredly the intelligent and patriotic men of China would oppose it.

The second solution would be the emergence of a strong, ruthless, courageous, patriotic, unselfish, and righteous *dictator*, but all agreed that there is no such man, and that a dictatorship is not a good democratic school.

The third solution, said this competent observer, was the *slow regeneration of China*, or the development of enough honest and unselfish men to lead the country, by the transforming influences of the Gospel.

This was the dark diagnosis of China's present condition, which was given to us in advance. In China, however, in contact with the swiftly moving forces which are now at work and feeling all the while beneath us the great solid mass of the Chinese people, brighter views soon emerged.

Economically China has been on the verge of ruin many times before. In 1909 the "London Graphic" declared that China was "steadily drifting toward bankruptcy" and that only superhuman efforts could save her. The present financial conditions of the national government are disgraceful, but they are due wholly to corruption and incompetence and not to the poverty or lack of resources of a nation whose wealth has hardly begun to be developed. If China has been able to maintain four hundred million people on vegetables and grains, what will she not be able to do when she develops the possibilities of animal and mineral wealth and introduces manufactures? Roads alone, which she has wholly lacked in the past, would go a long way to unifying China and setting in living motion her sluggish blood. Already the railroads are coming and in city after city one can now hear the wheels of that vast latent industry of China begin to stir whose thunder will some day fill the whole world. When I first saw Shanghai, I doubt whether a cotton factory or silk filature had yet been built. Six years ago the cotton mills stretched in a long line along the Whang Poo river. Now mill after mill with the most modern machinery has been added and great silk filatures have gone up. Alas! they are not providing rational employment for men and women only but are sucking the life blood of China's children.

There is no more vivid illustration of these boundless economic possibilities of China which banish the idea of a real national bankruptcy than the city of Nantung-chow, whose Nantoon Embroidery and Lace Works Shop has been opened on Fifth Avenue in New York City. In a city of 150,000 a hundred miles from Shanghai and in a district of a million and a half people, Chinese enterprise and integrity alone are now producing annually a million bales of the best grade of cotton in China; have built more than fifty miles of modern roads, two modern cotton mills with sixty thousand spindles, five hundred looms, and three thousand operators, a modern cotton seed oil mill, a match factory, a flour mill, a silk filatur, an iron foundry, an electric light plant, and a modern agricultural college; have established cotton and sericulture experiment stations and schools of instruction, five modern banks, three hundred and thirty-four schools with more than twenty thousand students, and a direct steamer line to Shanghai; and are projecting hundreds of miles of new roads, seven new cotton mills, coal mines, and the reclamation of thousands of acres of flooded lands along the Yangtse. These are but the beginnings of what is coming. The great economic peril of China is not bankruptcy but commercialism.

THE POLITICAL SITUATION

The political situation also takes on a more hopeful aspect as one feels the swelling forces of the nation at a distance from the corruption and despair of Peking. A most interesting movement is going

on. It is the deliberate purpose and endeavor of the men who are controlling the local and provincial life of China to break up or to ignore the present national government. The rival southern government in Canton is not acknowledged beyond the Kwangtung province and has not displaced the separate provincial governments. These leaders are bent upon setting up in each province a separate and independent provincial government with its own constitution and civil officials duly elected by the people, and then to federate these provincial governments in one national federal government.

This is not a new ideal. This very issue arose at the beginning of the Republic in 1911. It was fought over in the first parliament in 1913 between the Peiyang military party which looked up to Yuan Shih Kai, and the revolutionary party later transformed into Kuo-mintang, headed by Sun Yat Sen. Thanks to the Tuchuns or military governors established in each province by Yuan Shih Kai, side by side with and always checking the civil governors, the policy of the military centralizationists has thus far prevailed. There has now appeared a group of Tuchuns like General Wu, General Feng (known as the Christian general because of his outspoken Christian character and enthusiastic evangelism), General Chow, and General Chen, who appear to be in hearty sympathy with the idea of provincial civil self-government. Within the last few weeks they appear to have disposed of General Wang, one of the three unprincipled war lords. The Federationists now claim that their cause has prevailed and that they have perfected their political organization (at least in its incipiency) in Hunan, Szechuen, Kweichow and Chekiang. They claim Kwangsi and Hupeh are now preparing their constitutions in their provincial legislatures and will soon join the ranks of the self-governing provinces. The aims of the whole movement have been distinctly stated by one of its advocates as follows:

"The provincial self-government movement in the present form may be defined as an endeavor on the part of each province to substitute constitutional government for arbitrary military rule with the ultimate aim of uniting China into a federation of self-governing provinces independent of and supplanting the activities of Peking and Canton. Its scope can be said to include the following:

- "(1) Compilation of a provincial constitution.
- "(2) Abolition of tuchun system.
- "(3) Abstention from entanglement with the policy of unification adopted by Peking and the cause of the constitution upheld by Canton.
- "(4) Promotion of self-government in provinces that are still under military control.
- "(5) A temporary informal alliance of self-governing provinces for mutual protection.
- "(6) Federation of self-governing provinces in the end.....

"The ultimate aim is a federation of self-governing provinces. As to the advisability of making China into a federal state, the federalists argue

that the unwieldy size of the country, the historical positions of the provinces, the wide differences in geography, climate, the temperament of the people and local interests, and the futility of uniting China with force, all tend to show that union is possible only through federation. At present a federation is gradually becoming a reality and under the existing conditions there is possibly no better way of uniting the country than through a federation of self-governing provinces."

Whether in this or in some other way it may be possible to forestall the impending ruin and disintegration of China as a nation is a question which hangs on other questions.

Can the abysmal corruption of China be cured? The Chinese classics declare that man is born virtuous, and probably no other people have ever been educated for so many centuries under a high theoretical morality, and yet a foreigner who lived for a generation in China and who had the greatest affection and respect for the noble qualities of the people, in a series of articles which he wrote several years ago for the "National Review of China," did not hesitate to speak of the stern realities of their life as "so vicious, so false-hearted, and so corrupt as never to have been surpassed in the whole human record.....Chicanery, subtlety, cunning, sharp practice, knavery, artfulness, intrigue.....All these have become an integral part of the nature of countless millions of Chinese and this in spite of the teaching of the sages.....Duplicity and hypocrisy march hand in hand, lying and deceit become virtues, and bribery and corruption as inevitable as the handling of pitch." These are the judgments of the kindly spirited George Lanning, for many years principle of the Shanghai Public School. He would offset them by many admiring judgments of the strength and industry and worth of the Chinese, but he would qualify them little if at all in their application to Chinese official life.

Bad as other nations have been China seems to surpass them all in graft and official corruption. It has been estimated that not more than ten or fifteen per cent of the native collection of revenue has ever reached the Imperial treasury. The last ten years of the Republic have offered even greater opportunities than the officials enjoyed under the Manchus. The money which China has borrowed from other nations has been filched by her own public servants, and as yet no public opinion has been developed which would call the thieves to judgment. It is even alleged, although I do not know with what truth, that of twenty million dollars collected from the heavy tax imposed on telegrams, railroad tickets, etc., to be applied to famine relief, only four million dollars have ever been paid over to help the starving—and the tax is still being collected. On such rotteness no new China can be built up. Can this corruption be cured?

The second question follows obviously. Can the character of the Chinese people sustain an honest and righteous national life? Have

they become under centuries of impotent moralistic teaching and the pressure of a struggle for existence unchecked by adequate spiritual sympathies and a sense of social duty, and pulled downward by sin and upward by no sufficient saving power so weak, so incapable of common trust and unselfish cooperation that they are beyond all hope? Those who know them best and who realize most clearly their weaknesses would be the last to admit this. In spite of the dishonesty and corruption of the tens of millions of idlers and drones, whose indolence is as conspicuous in China as the industry of its toilers, in spite of the fiction at the roots of Chinese family life which exalts filial piety but performs its duties only to the dead, in spite of all that is hopeless and degrading, those who know the Chinese believe that there is in them still the best raw material to be found in the world to subject to the regenerating and transforming power of Christ.

In the third place, can a body of new leaders be raised up in China who will have the character, power, courage, and readiness for sacrifice which will be required in them? It was at first hoped that the young Chinese educated abroad, now forming a distinct group known as returned students, might form this leadership. Some real leaders have indeed come from them, but most of these young people have been separated too far from the body of the nation. They lack experience with life, especially Chinese life, which is the condition of influence. Too many of them have been silenced by the easy device of small official positions. Still, in the little group of such men on the "Empress of Asia," one could not doubt that there are some whose Christian character and undoubted abilities will make them useful servants of China and of the Christian Church. But as in every other nation the real leaders of China must be trained in schools on its own soil. The national schools are just now closed, but the provinces are projecting modern education on a new scale. Kwangtung province is specially enterprising, and its educational commission has adopted a scheme of compulsory education for the province. The governor has authorized co-education at the request of the Canton Women's Union, an organization which has procured for women "equal privileges in getting appointments as clerks, inspectors, and to other positions in the national (i. e. provincial) assembly as well as in the railroad and other offices in Canton." The first provincial election in this province was held last August when women who desired to vote were not excluded and at least one of them will occupy a seat in the district council of Heungshan.

However great the extension of government schools, the Chinese will not be able financially nor, it is believed, will they be willing on principle to attempt to make of education a government monopoly. If Japan has found it necessary and desirable to relax its bureaucratic educational system and to allow a far wider range of liberty to private education, it is certain that China will be willing to do so.

The recent experience and investigation of some of the higher Christian schools seems to indicate that there is no necessity and no advantage in the registration now of mission educational institutions in the government system. It is a question whether there is any government system as yet, and the present hold of the mission schools on the confidence and support of the people is so great that all over China they are crowded to their fullest capacity. It would be difficult to exaggerate their present opportunity or the great service which may be rendered in the increase of their efficiency and adaptiveness by the judicious and sympathetic council and support of the Educational Commission sent out by the Foreign Missions Council of North America.

The fourth question, which to the missionary faith is no open question at all, relates to the power of the missionary enterprise under God's blessing to plant in China the tree "whose leaves are for the healing of the nations." Some unfavorable criticism regarding the missionary body in China has been made recently by visitors from whom it might least have been expected. Mr. Lanning's judgment is more reliable: "The missionary body (in China) as a whole stands out in bold relief as the noblest, bravest, most altruistic, and best of all bodies of men that exist or ever did exist. . . . The Christian religion has been brought to China by a body of men and women never before surpassed for nobility of character or greatness of aim. . . . It is quite as much due to them as to any other single cause that China today is thoroughly awake. To them is due that new desire which is already reenergizing the old forces. To them and to their native successors. . . . will be given more and more of the power that will shape the future of China."

Everywhere one sees today evidences of the way Christian faith and truth are striking down and striking out through Chinese life. The very terms in which the Christian ideas are expressed, which at first were of necessity so crude and inadequate, are being transformed or replaced by expressions which more fully utter the Gospel. The Chinese Church is full of a new life and vigor. There is no barrier that we need to fear anywhere in the way of the evangelization of China. The evangelistic opportunity which the two greatest department stores, the Sincere Company and the Wing On Company, allow their employees every Sunday morning while business is suspended and a preaching service is held, are a symbol of the wide open door everywhere.

There remains the last question—will the nations allow China time? And as to the Church, has she waited too long? Does she intend longer to wait? Once again the summons which the Chinese Christians brought to Archdeacon Moule in the days of the Taipings sounds forth as clear as the call of God, "*Now is the opportunity. Strike while the iron is hot.*"