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Missions

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*One Century Past,
Another To Come*

ROBERT ELLIOTT SPEER

ONE CENTURY PAST, ANOTHER TO COME

Address by

ROBERT ELLIOTT SPEER

Retiring Senior Secretary

of The Board of Foreign Missions

of the

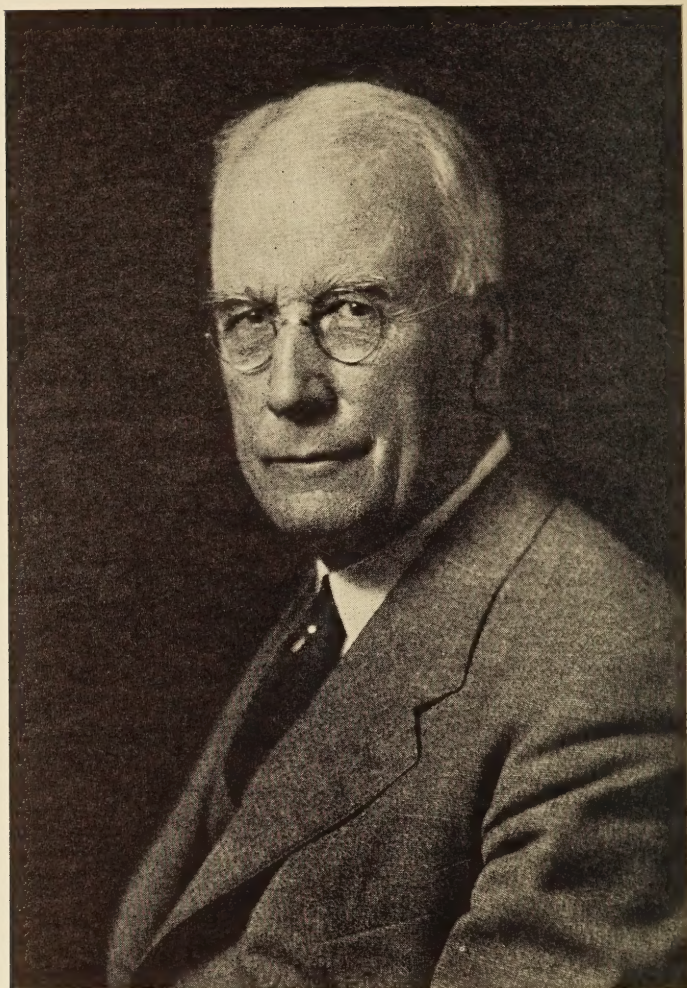
Presbyterian Church in the United States of America

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THE BOARD OF FOREIGN MISSIONS
OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
156 FIFTH AVENUE, NEW YORK, N. Y.



Robert E. Spear.

INTRODUCTION OF DR. SPEER

By MISS MARGARET HODGE

*Vice-President of The Board of Foreign Missions
of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America*

MR. MODERATOR:

MEMBERS OF THE ASSEMBLY:

I am here today as the representative of the organized women and children of the whole world.

An interesting story of two little American children and a letter they wrote four years before The Board of Foreign Missions was organized is given in the June, 1937, number of *Women and Missions*. I quote a few sentences:

"Dear Heathen:

The Lord Jesus Christ hath promised that the time shall come when all the ends of the earth shall be His Kingdom. . . . Why do you not help it to come sooner by . . . renouncing your idols and take Christianity into your temples? . . . My sister and myself have by small self-denials procured two dollars which are enclosed in this letter to buy tracts and Bibles to teach you.

ARCHIBALD ALEXANDER HODGE
MARY ELISABETH HODGE

Friends of the Heathen"

How surprised that little ten-year-old boy would have been to know that he would grow up to go as a missionary to India and that his family would spend a night praying for him before he sailed because of "the fearful dangers" to which he was going. Or that later he would be associated with his great father in Princeton Theological Seminary. Or that the granddaughter of little nine-year-old Mary would be today a secretary in the Board of National Missions and would cherish this letter as one of her choice possessions.

We have been reminded this morning of the many witnesses to the faith, those in heaven and those in many parts of the earth. But one group was not definitely mentioned—the Christian women of the various National Churches. Centennial greetings have been sent to our Board of Foreign Missions from ten groups, expressing their gratitude for the gift of the Gospel and their joy in working with us to carry it to others still unevangelized.

The women of our Church here have been organized locally and worked for foreign missions for more than the century. But in the '70s seven Woman's Boards of Foreign Missions were organized, working more and more closely together until at their Jubilee they formed one Woman's Board of Foreign Missions "auxiliary to and cooperating with The Board of Foreign Missions." And in 1923 when the Assembly reorganized all the Boards the one Board of Foreign Missions composed of men and women was set up and that Board is today celebrating its Centennial.

Notwithstanding the complimentary remarks of the Moderator as to the way in which the women have handled their problems, we women know that their happy solution was often reached by the help of the Senior Secretary of The Board of Foreign Missions, for he would be sure to give sympathetic understanding and appreciation of the work that the women were doing.

And so, Mr. Moderator, it is with sincere gratitude that the representative of the women has the honor to present to the General Assembly the Senior Secretary of The Board of Foreign Missions: ROBERT E. SPEER.

ONE CENTURY PAST, ANOTHER TO COME

By ROBERT E. SPEER

MR. MODERATOR, MR. CHAIRMAN, FATHERS AND
BRETHREN, MY FELLOW-WORKERS:

One would be very ungrateful indeed if he were not deeply and sincerely appreciative of all this kindness of feeling on the part of the Assembly, and of these generous, all too generous, words spoken by Miss Hodge and embodied in the report of the Standing Committee. One's only feeling, as he looks back over all this great wealth of years that are gone—not one's only feeling, but one of one's deepest feelings—is, of course, the feeling of regret that the service has not been better, the sense of one's own inadequacy to the opportunities and the duties of one's time. If my dear old associate Dr. Ellinwood, one of the best and noblest Christian men I have ever known—if he could write at the end of his life, as he looked back, that he had no feeling of complacency with regard to it, how much more must we feel so who had no such gifts as he, and who rendered no such glorious service as his.

I often repeat to myself the lines of one of Whittier's most famous poems:

"Let the thick curtain fall
I better know than all,
How little I have gained,
How vast the unattained."

But the deeper thought that comes—the Christian thought—is the thought of the privilege that we men and women who are here on the platform have had in sinking our lives in this mis-

sionary enterprise. I remember very many years ago when I was a boy in Phillips Academy at Andover, Massachusetts, stopping at Yale on my way home to visit my elder brother who was a student at Yale, and going on Sunday morning to Battell Chapel where Joseph H. Twitchell was preaching in his very unconventional way. I do not remember what his text was, but I remember one story that he told. A lad whom he had known years before to whom a small patrimony came, which the boy did not want to waste, went to one of his old friends, a wise and successful man, and asked him for his advice. How should he invest his life and this money of his? "My son," said the old man, "I will tell you what to do. Attach yourself to one of the great feeding interests. Don't manufacture things that can be dispensed with. There will come times when men will give up their luxuries, but there will never come a time when men will not have to eat. And if you want to be identified with one of the secure interests of mankind, attach yourself to one of those which feed the hunger of the world."

We men and women in this missionary enterprise belong to that undertaking. We have heard One saying still, as He said long ago, "Give ye them to eat." We look out on a world which, whether it knows it or not, is famishing for bread that is available and which the Christian Church is able to give. And it has been our glory and joy these years, some of us now who are sitting here, for nearly fifty years, to be associated with this great interest, so great that we who worked in it were as nothing save as we forgot ourselves and were only instruments in the great movement to bring the Bread of Life to the world.

And all our thoughts on this Centennial occasion turn away from anything we have been able to do, to gratitude for what God has done across the Hundred Years that are past. We recognize that He has done it through human agents, and we thank Him more than words can say for the men and women whom we have known and with whom we have been associated, whom He has used in this enterprise of His across these last nearly fifty years that I have seen. We are grateful to God for the men and women at home. I have known all but three of all the secretaries of The Board of Foreign Missions from its be-

ginning 100 years ago. The only ones whom I do not remember are Walter Lowrie, J. Leighton Wilson, David Irving. All the rest of them from John C. Lowrie, the first missionary and second secretary, whom I came into the Board to succeed (so that our two lives bridge our entire history), to the present day, I have known and loved; and not least, these three noble, pure-hearted, devoted servants of Christ who have retired from the service of the Board, but are still with us, my beloved friends, Dr. Arthur J. Brown, Dr. Cleland B. McAfee, and Mr. Russell Carter who would have been here as a commissioner from Newark Presbytery, but who has been detained by illness. One thanks God for having been in such a company as this, of men and women who were seeking nothing for themselves, but who had learned from Walter Lowrie the great tradition of the true spirit of service in the foreign missionary cause, and who had their joy in being lost in the missionary undertaking.

And how grateful we are for that larger company whose representatives are here with us this day, those 5,000 missionaries who in the 100 years that are past have gone out from our Church to bring the Bread of Life to the world. Again and again in thinking about them I take down and re-read one of the noblest addresses ever made in America, the Memorial Address of Horace Bushnell, delivered in Yale College at the end of the Civil War. It is entitled "Our Obligations to the Dead." If you have never read it, get it on the next Memorial Day and read it—read what, before the echoes of the Civil War had died away, one of the greatest prophets of our land said with regard to the duty we owe to those who with a great price bought our national unity. I remember especially the four obligations to the dead of which he spoke. It is our duty to sanctify their names, and to defend them from all defamation; we must remember the names of the dead, and the deeds they had done; we must do this especially with regard to the nameless and the obscure; and lastly we must take their places and stand in their cause. It is the third one of these I often think of—our debt to the nameless and the obscure. It would be easy to recall the great names, like that of W. A. P. Martin, to whom Dr. Price referred, great and glorious names that shine like stars in our missionary sky. But I am think-

ing of the greater company of men and women whose names are not mentioned, who carried the great burden of the task, for, after all, it is the names of the unremembered that are the glorious names which will shine when at last the books unfold. One looks back with thanksgiving on all these unremembered men and women and what they have done across the years. We bless God for them. They are in that great company of the witnesses who from the ramparts of heaven look down on us this day and share with us in this Centennial celebration.

We are grateful for these men and women, and also for the vision that was given to them, and the courage with which, 100 years ago, they set themselves to this new and untried task. I have read again and again, and it would be a great spiritual experience for us all to read, all the reports of the Board, and of the Western Foreign Missionary Society which preceded it, in those early years, and all the Minutes of the General Assembly for those years in their every reference to this missionary cause. And if you want to have your pride in our Church lifted, and to gain new occasion for thanking God for the loins out of which we have sprung, you should read again these courageous deliverances in the acceptance of their duty by the women and the men of our Church 100 years ago. I have here with me today a selection of quotations from these earlier records to bring back the flavor of them. I will read only one from the declaration of the Assembly of 1838:

"For the salvation of the world, God employs the agency of his Church and people, and has united the means and the end together; and that he who disregards this arrangement, and withholds his aid and assistance, especially at such a time as this, fails in his duty to God and to the benighted heathen.

"That it has always been the duty of the Church to make known the Gospel to all the world; and in this day of light, with such facilities for this purpose, and so many calls and openings of Divine Providence, this duty is greatly increased; and no Church which neglects it can expect the blessing of God upon her interests.

"It is the duty of the Presbyterian Church to provide the means necessary to send out and support every properly qualified

foreign missionary that may be accepted by the Board; and the General Assembly would solemnly remind the members of the Church, that all are required, by the Word of God and their covenant engagements with Him, according to their talents and means, to do what they are able, to promote the glory of God by sending the knowledge of the glorious Gospel to the benighted heathen."

A great anthology could be assembled of the deliverances of our General Assembly in these early years as it faced with resources so scanty in comparison with ours, and difficulties so great, its missionary duty.

We recall also the glorious sacrificial devotion of these men and women. Our hearts went out last night as we saw Walter Lowrie here speaking to Mitchell and Orr, giving them their missionary commissions, and remembered that he consecrated three of his own sons to missionary service: John C. Lowrie, our first missionary in India, and his two brothers, Reuben and Walter, who went to China, Walter to die a martyr's death, and Reuben to be the father of one of the greatest saints of modern missions, the Rev. J. Walter Lowrie. We have two priceless little books in New York, the memorial of Louisa Lowrie—John C. Lowrie's wife, who died five weeks after their arrival in Calcutta—and Lowrie's own account of his lonely founding of the work in northern India. In these two little books we have John Lowrie's revelation of all that those tragic experiences meant. He recalls that afternoon in the Delaware River, off New Castle, when the little ship opened its sails to the breeze, and he waved farewell to his father, never expecting to see his native land again. He went out as the missionaries did in those days, never expecting to return. One remembers with joy all of these missionaries of our Church, and I would say a word of a forgotten group among them, who are the people who really pay the price. We think it is the fathers and mothers, but it is the missionary children. They do not choose to be born outside their own land; they do not choose to be deprived of all the privileges that surround the Christian child in a Christian land like ours, and I don't wonder that there may have been a very few among them who have resented the price they have had to pay for the

missionary enterprise. But they have their reward. There is no group of children in any set of families in any place or nation comparable with the children of the foreign missionaries for what they have produced in the way of service for the Christian Church and the nations of the world. That is no idle boast. I gathered the statistics some years ago for the American Eugenics Society, and you would be amazed if you knew them. In "Who's Who," or any list of the great names in the modern world, they have their foremost place and their reward for all their sacrifice.

And we thank God for all those great convictions of the fathers on which alone the missionary enterprise can rest, without which it would never have been originated, and apart from which it cannot be sustained. They are undisturbed by all the storms that have blown across the life of our Presbyterian Church. Read carefully the arguments on both sides of the New and Old School controversy. They never touched the fundamental unity that lay beneath in the conviction common to the Old and New School churches, that the world is lost in sin, that every man needs a Saviour, and that the only Saviour is Jesus Christ. Because of the recognition of their common conviction, after a generation of experience of the loss by division, the two sections came together on the Rock on which they stood when they separated, and on which they had really stood all through the years of their separation. We shall come together some day with the Southern Presbyterian Church, because that Rock is there beneath both of us today. Whatever divergencies there may be, whatever superficial differences, we hold one common fundamental faith—that we have both of us the one and only Foundation, our Lord Jesus Christ. We shall be wise enough one of these days to discover this. We have all the basis of union we need, and we will come together some time, standing where our fathers stood, and where, across 100 years, they are calling to us, with the voice of a century, to stand fast today.

And how thankful we are for the accomplishments of the century! We began with two Missions, and we now have twenty-five, a number of them representing consolidations. I remember when we had a great many more Missions, two each in Japan, Persia, Shantung, and Siam, but we combined them. We began

with two churches, one in Allahabad and one in Lodhiana. Contrary to the general impression, Allahabad is the older of the two. Now we have 5,000 churches. At the end of thirty years we had only 1,500 members in our churches throughout all the mission fields. At the end of sixty years the number had grown to 60,000. At the end of the century it has grown to between 500,000 and 600,000. We have more members on the foreign field than we have in all the synods west of the Mississippi; more than we have in New York, New Jersey and all New England combined; and we have built up these churches against overwhelmingly greater difficulties than have been known at home.

My own memory runs back for forty-six years to the first of November, 1891, when I came into the fellowship and service of our Board. There were then 28,000 in our churches on the mission field. Now there are twenty times as many; a gain of over 2,000 per cent. Then our entire income was \$900,000; I have seen it grow to nearly \$5,000,000. Then all the permanent assets for the carrying on of our work were \$110,000; I have seen them grow to \$16,000,000. Then all the contributions on the foreign field were \$38,000 annually; I have seen them grow to \$2,000,000. Of the 5,000 missionaries who have gone out in the century, I have known four-fifths, and of the \$135,000,000 that have been given by the Church in the century to foreign missions, I have seen more than four-fifths given in these forty-six years that I have had the joy of working with the Board.

And back of all the statistics, there is a far greater accomplishment represented in these friends here today from the National Churches all over the world, these great living, autonomous, indigenous, National Churches; ecclesiastically independent of us, but our children. They would not have existed, if it had not been for our missionaries. Paul speaks of his churches as being his glory and joy. Think how much greater our reason for joy than St. Paul's. What did St. Paul accomplish? We have more Christians in Chosen alone today than St. Paul had in all his churches, than there were in all the other Christian Churches throughout the Roman world at the end of the first century; and that has happened in the memory of some of us in this room today. I

was there when Dr. Moffett and Mr. Lee were organizing the first Christian Churches in Pyengyang in northern Korea. I can remember when all the work in Korea began, and we have there alone now a larger fruitage than all the missionary activities of the Apostles produced.

And then there are the institutions set in the midst of all these lands. I see here my almost lifelong friend Dr. Waddell, and I think of the institution into which he built his life in southern Brazil. And we celebrated in December the founding of Forman College in India, the immortalized personality of Sir James Ewing. And here are others representing schools and hospitals which are the luminous shadows of men and women who are gone, each one of them a perpetual source of life and power in these different lands.

And behind all this there has been the steady invisible infiltration of the great truths of the Christian Gospel into all the life of the world. You cannot build walls around truth; no quarantine can shut the truth in. You let the truth loose, and it goes abroad over the world. Men may die for the truth, but the truth does not die, and they who die for it but "augment the great and sweeping thoughts that overspread all others and conduct the world at last to freedom." Read in this report of the Board to the Assembly how the Gospel has gone into the monasteries of Siam. And that is only a parable of the way in which all over the world Christianity has been slowly filtering into all the life and thought of mankind.

I have been reading this last winter the files of one of the ablest religious papers ever produced—The Bombay Guardian—edited for more than twenty-five years, from 1861 to 1888, by George Bowen, one of the most consecrated characters and powerful intellects which ever served the Church. If you want to see what has happened, go back fifty years and read the contemporary literature of the day, like the Guardian, and compare the thoughts of men then with the underlying principles which control the world in which we are now living. There is darkness enough in it, but you and I are living in a totally different world from the world of fifty years ago. Every one of the non-Christian religions is undergoing evangelization—every one of them. The

Christian thoughts are creeping into them; the Christian notions of the family; the Christian concepts of God and man; they are slowly beginning to take hold upon the life of the world and the thinking of mankind. The non-Christian world is beginning to talk of the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man—Christian conceptions which have slowly penetrated the whole life of the world—until men think of them today as though they were the traditional convictions of their own religions.

All this is miracle. Dr. Waddell met with the Board at its last meeting in New York, and he was speaking of the National Church in Brazil, the most powerful evangelical church in any Latin country except the Protestant Church in France; and he was referring to the weakness of the instruments by which this Church had come to be; and he might have supplemented his words by the mistakes and the failures and the weakness of the agency of Foreign Missions at home. What a miracle it all has been! Against the background of our human weaknesses and mistakes you can account for it only in one way—the Promise has been fulfilled. "All power is given unto Me, and I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." We thank God today for His faithfulness in fulfilling in our experience the last 100 years that promise of His dear Son.

But this Centennial is not celebrated by us today in mere remembrance of the past. The past is only a preparation. Its purpose was to fit us to confront our own time. And what a time it is, as we look out on it, in comparison with 1837. Go back and read the contemporary world situation in 1837, and then look out on the world in which we are living now, a world demonstrating on every side the reality of that titanic struggle which is going on in human life and history between darkness and light. I was impressed with what Prof. Dibelius wrote from Germany to England respecting the Oxford and Edinburgh Conferences—and by the way, the German Government has refused to give passports to the representatives of the German churches for the Oxford and Edinburgh conferences, or to our meeting in Montreal of the Western Section of the Alliance of Reformed Churches holding the Presbyterian System. He was writing before he knew that and he spoke of the only ground

on which they would be willing to come to Oxford and Edinburgh. They would not come if there was to be only conventional discussion of the problems confronting the churches; they would only come if it was proposed to "wage a war against the demons who stand behind the great revolt of the self-conscious and self-justified individual of our day against the living God." Adolf Keller also, in a recent letter, spoke earnestly of the great swing observable in the thought of the best minds of Europe today back to the New Testament conception that a great battle is going on. "We wrestle not with flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places." Is there one man here in this meeting who has not in his own experience come to grips with this tragedy, convincing him that life and history are no easy unfolding of latent benignant possibilities in human nature? They are a colossal death grapple in the dark between the One on the Cross and the forces who crucified Him, between the white, clean, radiant Light of God and all the devils of the night that are abroad across the world today.

We are not moving out smoothly into any easy experience of a Golden Age today. All that Dr. Leber said is true. The pioneering work is not done. The carrying of the Gospel into the great battle fields is not a mere story of the past; that battle is on now, as fierce as ever, with more malignant foes to contend against, and forearmed with colossal resources against which we must war. Thank God the same forces that are available for those enemies against whom we contend are available also for the Christian Church. A whole range of new agencies has grown up within our own time. I am reading Allen's "Only Yesterday," in which he is telling where we were in 1920, when there were no radios, when the airplane was hardly known, when the automobile was just beginning. These are only a few of the new instruments. All over the world there are new forces which we dare not surrender to our foes. We are equipped as the Christian Church has never been for the task ahead. And we have something more which we don't think about adequately because it has come so subtly, and which carries a promise of infinite accom-

plishment, and of infinite peril. A new force has been released in the world in the last twenty or twenty-five years, the force Miss Hodge was so graciously representing. Here we are, a great gathering of men. My friends, we do not represent the real dynamic of human progress. We may think we do. But behind us is the great force that is the real compelling influence in the world—the mothers, the wives, the sisters, who shape the generations as they come and pass. All that great energy is just beginning to release itself on the main levels of life in our new world. As I was trying to point out to the women the other morning, we are beginning in a new sense to realize what the New Testament is speaking of when it talks about veils being taken away. One of the greatest veils that has ever been across human society has been rent in our time, the veil that has hung over the face, and across the force of womanhood. And the sooner we awake, the sooner we realize that this colossal energy is to be linked to the progress of the Gospel as it was that morning when women first saw the Resurrection, and bore first witness to it, the sooner will the new century tell a different story from the past, if here on its threshold the Christian Church discerns the signs of the time and makes adequate use of this tremendous force now released and held in the hands of the women of the world.

And democracy is not dead. We need not think that because in Europe the iron hand has been laid on three great masses of mankind that therefore democracy is dead. One half of the population of the world lives in two countries in Asia, India and China. Offset Russia, and Italy and Germany, if you will, with China and India. There are more people in China and India, three times over, than there are in Italy, Germany, and Russia, and behold the vast and mighty stir among them. And do you think people anywhere are going to be held in iron clamps for ever? For a little while, as long as bread and games may last, they may be held. But beware of the common people when they wake, when their iron hand is bared. We are not at the end of the day that our Lord made possible when He came, a common Man among men, and founded His Church on the foundation stones of the Apostles and prophets and martyrs—

a brotherhood of free common men. We are not beyond that day yet.

We turn our eyes last to what lies ahead. Not of the past and the present only are we to think. There is a new century reaching one hundred years in advance of us. There are those who think that the story of this new century will be different in the matter of the missionary enterprise. They think the missionary day is done. It was a noble story, they say, but the old motives no longer live; the Church cannot command today, as it has in the past century, the men and the wealth, if we are going to obey the last command of Christ. Well, God pity any of you young men who fall into such despair. I think of an old man, many years ago, who wrote a famous letter in a prison. He was chained to the gaoler who had charge of him. Friends had left him; many of them were trying to make things worse for him by their insincerity. Not very far ahead he saw the shadow of a cross athwart his pathway. And as he lay there, in the Mamertine Prison, St. Paul wrote the second chapter of Philippians, where he held before his eyes the vision of a different world, where every knee would bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

If that old missionary of the first century, alone, in chains, could hold that hope, shame upon us today if we cannot go out into the new century with the same confidence. No doubt there is darkness around us, but "whoso will may hear at times a Sentinel who moves about from place to place and whispers in the world of space in the deep night that all is well. And all is well, though faith and form are sundered in the night of fear. 'Well' roars the storm to those who hear a deeper voice above the storm." To that Voice may we be listening now, today, the Voice of One Who walked with our fathers the bright road of the 100 years that are gone, and Who is calling us today to walk with Him the more glorious road of the 100 years that lie ahead.

