

## The Missionary Spirit

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During the past week a series of meetings of great importance has been held in the neighboring towns of North Adams and Williamstown. This is a meeting of the American Board of Foreign Mission celebrating the hundredth anniversary of the famous Haystack prayer meetings.<sup>2</sup> The importance and success of these meetings {???) to desire to speak upon the general subject of the missionary spirit.

If you stop to think of it Christianity is fundamentally a religion of missionary activity. The missionary work of the Christian Church is not now and never has been based upon any specific saying of the founder of Christianity, or his followers. It is not because Jesus said, "go preach the word," nor indeed because Paul actually did go and preach the word, and establish the Gentile church, and inoculate the entire Roman world with the gem or religious truth, which was the spirit of Jesus's teaching.

It may be that many a man and many a religious enthusiast has given as the ostensible reason for his missionary activity the command of Jesus as the warrant for his zeal, and example of Paul as the stimulus for his sacrifice and hardship. But far deeper than that one must seek ere he comes to the foundation stone upon which rests the activity of the Christian Church in its attempt to extend the influence of the teaching of Jesus.

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<sup>1</sup> At the end of the manuscript there is a note, "{???) finished. Preached Oct. 14, 1906." The notation before "finished" might be "Un"; the sermon does have an unfinished feel to it.

<sup>2</sup> The Haystack Prayer Meeting was held in Williamstown, Massachusetts, in August 1806. Prompted by five Williams students who wanted to discuss the spiritual welfare of people in Asia, the result of the meeting was the creation of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions.

Christianity is a religion of Idealism. It was conceived and born in Idealism. Tracing its ancestry back over the Jewish line of descent, we see there the growing plant of an idealistic conception of the world towards which it is growing and for the realization of which it is working. Whatever may have been the forms in which the suffering Jew of the exile expressed his hope in better days, and a broader justice, and a fairer and more peaceful life, at the bottom of the great hope in the coming of the messiah, is the idealism of a nation of Idealists. To dream dreams, and to see visions, and to feel that where there is not the fuel of dreams and visions there the fire, the worth of life goes out, that has been [the] predominate atmosphere of Jewish life since the days when it first came to its national self-consciousness.

But Christianity is not alone Jewish. It is the progeny of the marriage of the Jewish Genius, and the Greek Genius. Christianity was born of the ancestry of Plato and Aristotle. Here again we trace its origin to a nation that at its best made all things according to the Pattern, the ideal, of which particular events, and things were but the manifestations. A world of Justice, a world in which wisdom, courage, and obedience shall obtain, is not alone the thought of the Greek Philosopher, but it is a part of the Greek mind. In this nation of idealists, and dreamers, Christianity has its roots.

Whether we trace it to its Jewish or its Greek source find the stream of the Christian religion taking its origin high up on the mountain-sides of Jewish and Grecian Idealism, where the human soul sees not alone the rough and forbidding earth beneath his feet, but can look up and feast his being upon the infinite expanse of the deep pure heavens. In Jesus the prophet of this new dispensation {??}, both this spiritual Idealism of the Jewish race and the moral and intellectual Idealism of the Greek.

In the message of the carpenter prophet, the fusion of these idealistic forces became the voice of God speaking through his prophet, saying "Repent ye. For the Kingdom of God is at hand."

But the fusion of these forces took place in the midst of the Roman world, and Jesus lived and preached at a time when the Roman world was great, and its arm of authority extended into all countries, and its great city of the seven hills became the

center for all inflowing, and outgoing tides of human thought and activity. While Christianity may have been born in the dreamers land of the East, it was educated, and grew into its maturity amide the atmosphere of administrative and executive ability of Rome. Rome could not dream, could not think, could not see visions, but it could conquer nations, and build a great Empire guided not so much by its idealism, as by its keen sense of the inherent power of living realities. To build from the bottom up, from the facts to theories, from parts to the whole, from the seen to the unseen, that was the Genius of Rome. When we see in the Christian Church the beginning of that organization of a spiritual community into a complete and perfect system, we are reading the hard {???) of the Roman Genius upon the {???) of human history. It is a power not to be sneezed at, nor to be looked down upon. Lacking the Jewish messianic hope, still remained a dream, and still the Jew looked back over the history to the days of David and longed anew [for] the greatness of Israel. Lacking it the Grecian Idealist still lived in the midst of an Epicurean Grecian. Greek and Jew both having it, the world blossomed into the glory of the new dispensation, endowed not only with the will to believe in ideals, to dream dreams and to see visions, but also endowed with the power to act.