

A WORLD ENCIROLING MOVEMENT—HOW SHALL IT FULFIL GOD'S DESIGN?

The Message of the President of the United Society of Christian Endeavor, Rev. Francis E. Clark, D. D., to the 16th International Convention of Christian Endeavor Societies, San Francisco, July 8, 1897.

You can readily perceive why this year I have chosen for the subject of my annual message, the theme, "A World-Encircling Religious Movement; How shall it Fulfil God's Design?"

At the invitation of friends, and in obedience to the call of God, as I believe, I have, during the past year, been journeying in many lands, among people who speak many tongues. These journeys in behalf of Christian Endeavor have carried me more than 40,000 miles, to more than a score of peoples, who speak nearly as many languages. One factor I have found constant in all these lands; I have found Christian Endeavor principles everywhere the same.

The same pledge, the same consecration meeting, the same general lines of effort for the Master, called committee work. The utmost diversity in unessential details; the utmost similarity of purpose in essential principles.

Societies that are as widely separated in miles and manners as the Bengalis, who live in the swamps of the Ganges, and the haffirs on the uplands of Africa, from the Endeavorers of the Golden Gate and the Alameda, have subscribed to the same covenant pledge, and, better still, are keeping it.

I have attended conventions, since last I met you, in the Metropolitan Tabernacle of London, and in the Beels of Bengal; in St. Andrew's Hall of Glasgow, and in the ancient capital of the Punjab, among our Irish Endeavorers in Belfast, and on the sunburnt plains of Southern India; in crowded Berlin, and on the lonely table-lands of the Transvaal, among the Alps of Switzerland, and on the vast veldt of the Orange Free State, its sea-girt Stockholm, and in the karoo of South Africa; in lordly Paris, and in quiet Wellington; in the Cape of Good Hope, made sacred to many of you by the life and labors of Andrew Murray and his associates; and everywhere, amid all these diversities of custom and costume, of manners and methods, of language and laws, I have found that the Christian Endeavor ideals are substantially the same.

Moreover, the peoples whom I have seen have been of diverse creeds and views of religious truth. All, to be sure, have acknowledged the supremacy of Jesus Christ as the very Son of God and the only Saviour of lost sinners; all have accepted the Bible as the Word of God, and the Holy Spirit as the sanctifier, comforter, and guide,—in such soil only can Christian Endeavor flourish.

But in minor particulars the creeds and forms of church government of these hospitable hosts of our society differ as widely as their complexions. The shade of tan on a man's cheek does not make or unmake his manhood; the shade of his creed does not make or unmake his Christianity.

By Methodists and Baptists of Presbyterians and Congregationalists, by Friends and Disciples of Christ, by Episcopalians and Lutherans, by adherents of the State churches of Germany and Sweden and Holland and Scotland and England, as well as by representatives of every free church, have I been kindly received in the name of Christian Endeavor, and by every missionary society at work in India or Africa.

Why? Not by reason of any eloquent advocacy I could render Christian Endeavor, but because of the eloquent endorsement which a common and universal method of Christian service renders to its advocate.

Moreover, should you go much further afield than the months between two conventions have allowed me to travel, you would find the same thing true. You would hear Mr. Ling pleading for Christian citizenship in Foochow, and urging his fellow Chinese Endeavorers to drive the devils of civic unrighteousness into the Eastern sea, where they would be swallowed up like the Gadarene swine in the waters. You would hear Africaner Endeavorers devoting themselves to world-wide missions. You would see Japanese Endeavorers seeking, as you seek, the life that is hid with Christ in God, and Malagasy Endeavorers looking up through their tears for a defeated and degraded nation to the God of nations, and Armenian Endeavorers groaning as they think of their downtrodden and bleeding country. "How long, O Lord, how long!"

Could you have the invisible cap and cloak, you would see Christian Endeavor sailor lads on the briny billows fulfil their pledge under the eyes of jeering tars, and prisoner Endeavorers deying themselves their one weekly letter that they might give to missions the two-cent postage stamp, the only possessions they

could turn into ready money. We would see faithful little Juniors as true to their vows as the hoary saint, and a multitude of obscure Endeavorers in every land, whose honest, conscientious service no man records, but whom God hath written in His Book of Life.

Only one denomination still seeks to prevent the increase of Christian Endeavor societies, and that has introduced Christian Endeavor principles, and though we regret the absence of full fellowship we are glad of the extension of the ideas for which we stand,—in that we rejoice, yea, and will rejoice.

Our society then has these signs of a universal movement. It was born in obscurity and weakness. It has not owed its extension to human advocacy or ecclesiastical authority. It has spread to every land. It has been found adapted to every evangelical creed, and to every form of church government, and to every race and class and language and condition of people. It has failed only where the principles involved in our covenant pledge have been ignored, or where it has been crushed out by denominational authority.

This evident blessing of God, so vast, so unexpected, so undeserved, so far as human agencies go, should lead us to ask every year, with increasing humility and eagerness, what is God's world-wide design for the Society? What world mission has He for it to perform?

Our responsibility to fulfil God's purpose increases with our growth. The larger the movement, the more we conserve by our faithfulness, the more we wreck by our blindness or unfaithfulness to God's design. Let me then try to answer this vital question: How shall world encircling Christian Endeavor fulfil God's design?

1st. A world-wide movement must be true to its fundamental idea; for it is evidently to propagate that idea that God has established it. The fundamental purpose of Christian Endeavor is to raise the standard among young people of outspoken devotion and consecrated service.

This idea is embodied in our covenant pledge, and this idea makes our covenant imperative in a Christian Endeavor society.

This movement is not a conglomeration of every kind of young people's society; it is a movement for the spread of definite ideas, which God has owned and blest. Its whole history shows the supreme honor which God bestows upon uncompromising, unabashed, out-and-out service. Oh, Endeavorers, be true ever to this basal thought of Christian Endeavor! for upon it, on every page of our history, God has set the seal of His approval.

2nd. A world-encircling movement must necessarily be a unifying movement. This part of its mission is too plain to argue. It has brought forty denominations together, so far as ecclesiastical authority has not interfered, and bound their young people in blessed bonds they have not before known; later, it has forged a link between forty nations that speak forty languages; more than all, it has woven new strands of Christian concord between the four great English-speaking sections of the world, the United States, Great Britain, Canada, Australia. These bonds are made of many strands of common method and common name. The missionary colonies, too, of the English-speaking race, if I may so call them, are established in every clime, and a new connecting filament between them all is found in Christian Endeavor.

Arbitration treaties may be amended, or accepted, or rejected. The world-wide Christian Endeavor movement is a new treaty of love and good-will between millions of those who speak the same language and who work by the same methods for the same Lord.

Every year some of our British brethren come to our American convention. In 1900 I hope that 10,000 of you will accept the invitation of British Endeavorers to London to ratify and seal the international treaty of Christian Endeavor.

3rd. A world-encircling movement must be a persuasive force. You have shown the sign of universal adaptability, Christian Endeavorers, by entering into prisons and asylums, lighthouses and life-saving stations, men-of-war and merchant vessels, soldiers' barracks and factory lofts, as well as into all the activities of church life. There is another place very near home where your power and principles are felt, and where they should be felt still more, and that is the weekly church prayer-meeting. I know of no way so good of making this suggestion practical as by forming senior societies, whose chief distinction shall be that, without increasing church machinery, they apply the Christian Endeavor covenant pledge to the weekly meeting of the church. Already these senior societies, which form the veteran and the permanent cohort of Christian Endeavor, have been formed, not only in America, but in Australia, India, Great Britain, and South Africa, and always with blessedly beneficial results.

Remember the lesson, so hard for some of us to learn, that we are all sixteen years older than we were sixteen years ago; that the responsibilities of the Young People's Society must some time be transferred to younger shoulders; and that our effort should be as we grow older to develop younger workers, and to apply our own energies directly to the church meeting and all church activities. Thus, in the Senior Society, we are no less part of the Christian Endeavor movement, but both the church and this movement of the church are infinitely strengthened. I hope to see the senior societies multiplied tenfold the coming year.

Continued next week.