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Thamesy Goodrich, N. Y.



To the Churches

A Message —



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# A MESSAGE TO THE CHURCHES.\*

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 MESSAGE from the workers in the unterwelt, to our brothers and sisters on the top of the world, might be expected to draw a picture of China's pathetic condition and unparalleled circumstances, and appeal for loving sympathy and speedy succor. The story of the past few months appears, however, in varied forms in a myriad papers of the West. We desire to present briefly :—

1. The supreme work of the church in the new century.
2. The response of the church to the command of her ascending Lord.
3. Some reasons why we should seek to save China.
4. Methods by which the church may help to carry on the great work of missions. And finally,
5. A forward glance into the new time.

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The new century is begun, and we are already writing its history. How shall the twentieth century read? Where and how will it match the prophecies of long ago millenniums? What kingdoms will go down and disappear, what peoples come into an aeon of glorious prosperity? What place shall England and America and Germany take in the march of the ages? And India, and Turkey, and Persia, and Russia, and Africa, and China,—shall they swing into the line of progress, and keep step to the music of the new time?

What shall make the new century distinguished? Shall it go down into history as the great century of the world? Already there are previsions of possible marvelous achievements, such as aerial navigation for practical ends; huge pneumatic tubes for relieving the congestion of traffic between great centres; wireless telegraphy everywhere; electricity carried from countless waterfalls, or possibly caught from the sun—becoming the great manufacturing and motor power of the world; canals connecting the great oceans, and the great lakes with the ocean; and a system of railway almost belting the world. Who shall tell us the limit of discovery? For while the realm of science has been invaded, it has by no means been exhausted, and it never can be exhausted.

Most of the above outlook into the century, and more like it, may be found in a recent number of the *North American Review*. Every night thousands of telescopes, with their great eyes, are peering into the heavens and discovering its far away and long kept secrets. And every day numberless microscopes are gazing into the world where the millions upon millions of bacteria and microbes live, the world of atoms and molecules and centrosomes, and telling us the marvels of bioplasm and protoplasm, and the laws of biogenesis and evolution.

Franklin began playing with lightning long ago, and what multitudes at this moment are still playing with the strange unknown something, which most kindly serves us in such multitudinous ways, and which is to be one of the great forces of the future.

And so in all the sciences, with what intense enthusiasm are they pursued? Vast numbers of new schemes will be projected, and whole worlds of new discoveries perhaps made, in this century on whose threshold we stand. The impossible is always becoming the historic, and marvels seen in vision are by and by quietly read as history.

Such are some of men's thoughts about this century. We cannot doubt it will be a great century. Shall we already begin to question in what its distinguishing greatness will consist?

May we be pardoned if we refer for a moment to an old book which has *its* stories of a glorious future, some of them perhaps belonging to the present century? Do you ask if there is any hint within its covers of aerial navigation, of pneumatic tubes, of belting the world? Well, there are some things we might consider as marvels, even for the twentieth century. A man who had never heard of a balloon, and never dreamed of flying, a sort of anchorite he was, suddenly found himself in a chariot of glory, and was swept away into the skies. But he did not make a return trip. The chariot of fire only comes to take the weary pilgrim up.

Then there are wonder stories of talking with a person in a far away world, and receiving return messages from Him. Shall we accomplish anything more marvelous than that with wireless telegraphy, or our coming pneumatic tubes? And there is something too about belting the world. "From the rising of the sun to the going down of the same, my name shall be great among the gentiles." The earth shall be belted with the knowledge of a

great name. "It shall come to pass that men shall take hold, out of all the languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, we will go with you." It must be the earth shall be belted, for see how from remotest nations men come together. But it is a small thing for the earth to be 'belted.' "The earth shall be FILLED with the GLORY OF THE LORD." Filled with the glory of the Lord! Would not that be great enough to be the glory of a new century?

But there is a second volume to the old book, and there are marvelous things on its opening pages. Out of the heavens comes a majestic person. Do you tell us it is only a little baby? Oh! yes, we know. We have read the story scores of times, and always with an increasing wonder. All the books on bioplasm, and protoplasm, and evolution, have no such fascination as the story of this child. When He was born, a host of true aerial navigators suddenly appeared, and a song such as mortals never heard burst on the night. Wise men sought the little baby, and gave Him their gifts and their worship. The baby grew as other babies grow, but there was a touch of other-world grace and sweetness about Him. Men saw Him in His father's shop, and they said, that boy will make a good carpenter some day.

By and by His heart is strangely stirred, and away He goes into the desert. There He meets and conquers single-handed the great enemy before whom all the world, its greatest and best, have had ignoble defeats. Ah! Is this the baby who lay erstwhile with the cattle? This the little boy so diligent in His father's shop?

Now the work of His life opens before Him, and He performs marvels of power which might lead all the inventors, from Watts to Edison, to bow in silence and awe. He had a masterful power to do certain things—shall we say within the realm of law?—which law, unassisted, could yet never accomplish. Did it suggest that He might be the great Author of those laws which men are seeking to discover, and harness to their chariot of progress?

Hear the boy Milton describe his first gracious work to bless a wedding: "The conscious water saw its God and blushed." See the scales drop off from blind eyes. The tongue-tied mouth bursts forth into joyous thanksgiving. White leprous forms become suddenly fair and beautiful. The furious winds and angry waves are in a moment hushed to peace. Demons are startled from the breasts of maniacs and flee aghast. The realms of the dead are invaded, and dear ones come back from the silent world, as fresh and fair as though

the ceremonies of the grave had not been wrapped about them. And look upon this wonder worker, as a glory bursts forth from His person—the despair of painters, and the marvel of His followers, and men from out the sky appear and talk with Him. Aye! and again look upon Him. He who but just now was nailed to the bitter tree, and who lay in a tomb, rises from the grave with the bloom of immortal youth upon Him. See! See! He rises from the earth,—Where is His air ship? Has He learned the art of aerial navigation?—and soars upwards on a cloud of glory to His home above the stars.

Here is the one celestial product of all the centuries. Did not this one person, by His words and works, His life and death, His resurrection and ascension, make that far away century more distinguished than the great century out of which we have just emerged, with its marvelous inventions and million patents.

What now was this person's thought of life? Surely He could not come but to fulfill some great idea. Did He organise classes for teaching the sciences? Did He leave learned papers on astronomy and biology? Did He give experiments in electricity, X rays, and pneumatic tubes? Did He write of belting the world with railroads

and electric wires, or of finding wings and cleaving the air? Can it be that this wonder worker of the ages should not take a deep interest in the latest discoveries of science?

What did He do? He gathered around him a few fishermen and discoursed about setting up a kingdom of heaven in the world, and of the laws and the persons, the sacrifices and sufferings, rewards and glories of that kingdom. And just before He rose into the heavens, He left one last charge to His disciples, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature."

What does it all mean, the coming of the Son of God from the heavens, leaving His throne, stripping Himself of His glory, living a life of lowly love, and dying a death of cruel shame? Is not this series of marvelous events a witness that man is the one thing of value in this world; a witness that he wears the divine image and has a great destiny, and that momentous issues hang over this dot of a world, and this moment of time? To this Henry Ward Beecher once bore testimony when he said, "I would not take the risk of one soul, if this solid globe were gold and God would give it me." It is of greater moment to save one soul, than to belt and network the globe with railroads and electric wires. Flying may be well in

its way, but it holds no place beside the evangelization of the world. THIS is the supreme work of the new century.

Jesus does not look lightly upon science. He knows the exact weight of Polaris, Sirius, and Canopus, as well as their chemical analysis, and the precise arc of their celestial orbits. He balanced the wheeling orbs of the sky, so that in their intervolutions they move with a marvel of order, besides which man's highest skill is but the bungling work of a little child. He knows all the forces of all the sciences, with which men are clumsily playing. He knows where are all the treasures of gold and silver, the pearls and jewels that lie at the bottom of the ocean, or under the mountains. And He tells us that a single soul overvalues them all; that it is worth more than all the houses and lands, and gold and silver, and pearls and crowns and kingdoms of the whole world. (Matthew xvi: 26.) It was with this knowledge of the immeasurable value of man, and with His forecast into the infinite years, that Jesus left as His last command, "Go, preach the gospel to every creature."

How has the church responded to the command of her ascending Lord? During all the centuries there have been some who

have sought to spread among the nations the knowledge of the gospel. But it remained for the nineteenth century to witness the attempt to carry the gospel into all the earth. And the new century opens with the daily offering of prayer and praise from nearly all the peoples, and in nearly all the languages of the world. A great change wrought in a single century.

And yet—and yet, the church is still '*playing at missions.*' It is only her knitting-work. Oh! it is hardly her knitting-work. If the church but gave the time and thought and money which are spent on knitting and crocheting! There are indeed many persons giving their ~~time~~ and strength, their money, their prayers, and their love to the work. But the CHURCH! The trumpet call of the Master comes to her ear as the weak piping voice of a telephone, the clarion tones that stir the heart being almost lost in its passage from the skies and down through the centuries.

We once spent a night at Niagara Falls, arriving at midnight and finding a hotel a mile distant from the Falls. The world was asleep. Presently we heard a booming sound, and knew at once it was the muffled roar of the great cataract. That night we were sung to sleep with the lullaby of Niagara. In the morning we woke

and listened. Niagara was gone. *Was Niagara gone?* We knew the plunge and roar of the Falls were constant factors through millenniums. But the world had had its resurrection. Scores of wagons rattled through the streets, the noise and din of the world filled our ears, and drowned the music of Niagara's thunder. So is lost the wail of the millions dying without God. So is lost the command of the Master, "Go, disciple all the nations."

You have heard the story of the man in pursuit of a blackbird. He climbed up one tree after another, but on coming near to the branch on which it perched, the bird always spread its wings and flew away. Some one seeing him climbing and panting, inquired if he expected to catch the blackbird. He replied, "No, but I hope to worry it a little." Does the church expect to accomplish the work, or 'only to worry it a little?' Does the church give one dollar in a thousand of its income to foreign missions? Hardly that. About two per cent. of its gifts go to the heathen. Does she give one man in a thousand to the work? Some branches of the church give nearly that. One society has done more. The church which has been called "the little great Moravian church" has given one man in forty-nine, while the remaining forty-eight have taken it upon

themselves to support him with their gifts, and uphold him with their prayers. Do Christians, does the average Christian, give one minute per day to prayer and thought for the heathen? It is time for the Church to shake herself from the dust, and to resolve herself into a great syndicate for the evangelization of the world.

But we are in the land which is called, by some strange irony, the Celestial Empire. What shall be said of China? Are there any reasons why the Christian world should give itself to the saving of this people?

We need scarcely quote again the command of our Lord just before His ascension to the skies, a command that should be speedily executed by a militant church. And a quarter of the world are here. It is hard to fulfill the great command with only one ordained missionary to nearly half a million. It is like emptying Boston, or Liverpool, or Berlin, of all its inhabitants and churches and Bibles and Christian institutions, and filling it with stark heathen, whose minds are saturated with superstition and idolatry, and then putting into it one family to Christianize the place. And that is China. The men and women and children are here, all these millions:

“A million a month in China, dying without God.”

But if a command were not sufficient, perhaps one might be moved by China's need. What could be more pathetic than the condition of China at this hour—her Capital in ruins and held by foreign soldiers; her sovereign fled to a distant province where gaunt famine is stalking abroad; while demons are let loose in great districts, making death seem better than life to many. See the hands of poor China stretched upwards—to heaven? No! To a blank sky. Oh! we seem to hear from out the midst of this tragedy a deep undertone of wailing, like that which drew Jesus out of His heavens.

Moreover, the West owes a debt to China. If the great apostle owed a debt to all the heathen world, what a debt do we owe for the unspeakable blessings of the gospel and our Christian civilization! But we owe other debts, of wrong we have done to China. We will mention one. We owe a debt for the introduction of opium into China, a debt impossible to express in terms of money values. Hard sovereigns can never match immaterial spirits. Gold cannot be set over against souls. How feebly can we realise the unspeakable wretchedness and evil we have brought to China in

our opium chests? What now can we do but exert every effort to save China?

The law of self-preservation demands that we save China. If China remain heathen, she will be a menace to the Occident. Imagine her hordes of heathen pouring over into the Western world. It cannot be. She must first be evangelized. After China has been regenerated and lifted into a new life, the coming of some of her inhabitants would not wreck our lovely homes and our Christian institutions. The argument from self-preservation alone might well stir the Christian world to effort.

But China is not to remain heathen. There are great promises for the world, of which world China is a part. And right in the midst of a brilliant constellation of such promises, is one bright star with the name of China written upon it in letters of gold: "AND THESE FROM THE LAND OF SINIM." The words seem very beautiful in our Bibles. But promises are not self-fulfilling. For what are they written but as an inspiration to hope and effort? They hold an idea of blessed copartnership between God and His church. They lie there on paper for centuries, it may be millenniums, as lifeless as seeds buried with the mummies in the

catacombs. But they burst into life when men spring into effort. It is we that are responsible for the long delay in their fulfillment. So is it that the centuries have come, and the centuries have gone, the generations lived and died, and the great promise, written by the poet prophet two and a half millenniums ago, still lies buried up in the middle of the Bible. Here is a promise whose fulfillment shall set the heavens singing and the earth laughing. Will it not be a *burning shame* if this new century, itself full to bursting with prophecy, shall go by and the church give her magnificent energies to everything else, the meanwhile reading this thrilling chapter now and then on missionary Sabbaths? It cannot be.

We will not write here of China's great future. You will doubtless remember that Napoleon saw in China the future of the world.

Let us then, by the allegiance we owe to our divine Lord, by China's infinite need, by the debt we owe to China, by our own desire for self-preservation, by the thought of the future of this great people, by grateful love to our divine Lover, and pitying love to our needy brother; let us work for the redemption of China, and for the salvation of the world.

But just how shall we work. May we suggest?

1. BY WRITING.—Here is a great field for the Press, for papers and periodicals. Give us live articles on mission life and work—letters, news, children's articles, missionary stories. Make little maps of mission fields. Take, e.g., the West African field of the American Board. Make the home churches familiar with that field, as they are with church life in Massachusetts or London. Sprinkle missionary items through the various departments of your papers, and through every number. And do it in such a way as to make it most telling. Make it as certain that missionary news shall be read as the continually reappearing advertisements of Hood's sarsaparilla, or ivory soap, or pearline, which bring millions to their owners. Never intermit the subject. Follow it up as you follow up some burning question of the time. This is a burning question, THE burning question. Send out, if you will, newspaper correspondents with missionary consecration and fired with missionary enthusiasm, none other—to 'write up' mission fields, as your correspondents write up the South African war, or the siege in Peking. And for all this we who are on the nether side of the world must do what we can.

2. BY TEACHING.—A missionary literature is not enough. We want everywhere men and women filled with a knowledge of the missionary work and with missionary enthusiasm, to impart their enthusiasm and their knowledge to others, and especially to the young: parents in the home to instruct their children, and to make the missionary work a theme of daily and familiar conversation; teachers of schools, from the kindergarten to the university, schools of theology, medicine, yes, and law, all of them, in legitimate times and ways, to speak helpful and inspiring words to their pupils, and sometimes to provide for special instruction or lectures; pastors, from the pulpit, the preacher's throne of power, to speak words inspiring to prayer and effort, and in the home, to drop seeds which shall germinate in many hearts.

3. BY ORGANISING.—In other forms of effort we have learned the lesson well. We have our great corporations and syndicates and our methods which insure that our plans shall reach influentially, not only every city, but also every hamlet and every individual. Let the church also learn this lesson. In her plans for organization, let it be certain that no one shall be overlooked or omitted. As a

militant church, let her seek to bring the whole of her great army into the marching ranks.

4. BY COMING.—There must be thousands of young men and young women responding to the call with a glad “Here am I, send me,” all inspired with a sense of wondering gratitude for the high privilege of this great calling. Shall we say that we already have a goodly company in the field? So we feel when, as now, we are gathered together in a time of storm and stress. But when once we scatter, where is this little army? *Lost* in the multitudinous cities, among the surging crowds, and in far away districts. In the end—it seems at present far off—a time will come when no more preachers of a glad evangel need be sent, and the native church shall finish the work whose foundation has been so well laid.

5. BY GIVING.—But what need we say of giving, except that we give royally, give out of ‘baptized pocket-books,’ give with abounding joy, live to give, earn money to give, save to give, our hearts going with our money. But do we hear that ‘we must not pauperise our churches by too free giving? We must raise up a strong independent church.’ Yes, and for that we are earnestly working,

and continually planning. And when the time shall arrive that the gifts come pouring in in too large a stream, as once in the days of Moses, we will flash the news under the sea, (or shall it be through the sky?!) and say, stop your giving, and begin your hal-lujahs.

6. BY PRAYING.—Here is something which the millions of Christians everywhere can do. There is a limit to what may be done in working and giving, but there is no limit to the privilege and the power of prayer. It is still by prayer that the heavens are opened, and the holy dove descends. What gladness and strength and victory shall be ours, when each missionary has hundreds of persons, who make loving mention of us and our work continually at the throne of grace.

7. BY LOVING.—Love is the crown and glory of our gifts, the beginning and end of them all. Love is a little word, but like the twine of the kite, the little ball in the child's hand, it can stretch away into the skies and reach to heaven. Alas! We have hardly *begun* to love China. We wonder at China. We utter our diatribes at China. Sometimes we give our pity to China. But we cannot

love China. Oh! and what if He whose loveliness is higher than the heavens above our highest thought of it, had looked on us and said, I can *never* love such wicked, selfish, unlovely creatures. I might possibly live among them a few years. As an infinite stretch of pity I might even die for them. But love them! Ugh! They are so different from us, Father. Were they ever really made in our image? Oh! Jesus might have turned from us with infinite disgust, but so He did not. Even in the Old Testament we must needs have an exquisite idyl to reveal a love which seemed impossible. God loved our souls from the pit. (Isaiah xxxviii: 17, margin.) And the gospels—what are they but a marvelous love story four times told? Jesus is our great lover.

And we must love China. Icebergs will never thaw out the Arctic Zone. There must come some warm breath from near the world's heart. Love is the lever that shall lift the world. And love shall save China; a fresh, warm, unstinting, royal love, that gives and gives, and still delights to give. Such love, will open depths of love in this dear wicked people as we never dreamed of. The lost chord is found. It is love that is to make the new harmony in China. Let us not hesitate to break our alabaster boxes.

The aroma of the precious nard we seem to throw away shall by and by fill this land with its sweetness. Love is not such a strange plant in China. His love first and best, and then ours, shall draw this people by thousands and tens of thousands to Him. "These from the land of China." The word of Dr. Storrs for Turkey, spoken in a time which paralleled ours, shall yet be true here: 'The monogram of Christ shall yet be set upon the brow of China.'

What now does the redemption of this one land of China mean? It means the blessed Word of God in the homes of China's millions, as in our own homes in the sunset lands. It means a great system of education like that in the Occident. It means an extensive literature, reaching also the millions. It means an entire change of medical ideas and practise. Think what it means to work for such ends as these, and for a quarter of the world. But it means also a network of railroads and telegraph lines throughout China. It means the opening of the mines of China, the starting of new enterprises, the establishing of new mills and factories for the production of all kinds of goods,—a thing not to be deplored save by men whose brain and heart are shut up within their pocket-books.

It means new inventions and discoveries, when China is jolted out of her millennial ruts. It means her disillusion and disenthralment. The eyes of China shall never more be set in the back of her head. It means, and this is the glory of the new time, a new and righteous government, new laws, new homes, new men.

Impossible is it? It stands in prophecy; it shall be read in history. What were our own ancestors fifteen hundred years ago? Pagans. And who could have guessed their future? China too shall have her resurrection. Oh! this is not poetry, save as poetry is the expression of the highest truth. This *is* poetry, God's poetry of the new creation.

We seemed to dream. It was the last day of the twentieth century. We found ourselves in a lovely park of this metropolitan city, where an immense audience was gathered to celebrate the praises of this great century. The orator of the day spoke with a kind of pitying wonder of the aeons gone before. He said: Not to go back into the so-called dark ages, let us compare the century now closing with the one just preceding. To be sure, that age held some interesting discoveries, far eclipsed of course by those of our

own time. But it was a century of strange barbarities, cruel selfishness, and mutual recriminations and animosities. We can never forget what a strange and tragic close it had. Our own fair land, where now reign peace and love and plenty, was then filled with strife and carnage and unspeakable atrocities. It almost seemed as if we must perish like the great nations of antiquity. Even now I shudder when I think of that time. Added to all the rest, it was an era of female infanticide and lily feet, and polygamy, and household slavery, and opium taking, and unnameable sins, long since, thank God, relics of a barbarous past.

A change came over the spirit of the time. In the Occident, the century had begun with dreams of aerial navigation, and pneumatic tubes, and electric power carried every whither, and railways that should almost belt the globe. And such discoveries have indeed gone on in a marvelous way. But meantime men began to weary of their jealousies and rivalries, and there soon emerged a spirit of love, which was the beginning of a new heaven and a new earth. Fighting gave way to blessing, and piling up gold to generous giving. The great discovery was made that the interrelation of nations could be conducted, not on the old methods of grasping selfishness, but

on the older and everlasting principles of universal benevolence, that so indeed nations became great. Their thought was not centered on the question of how they could wring the most from China, how they might gain the greatest opportunities for commerce. But her Ministers, blessed men, labored with a singular devotion for her government, her laws, her regeneration and uplifting; for preparing my beloved land to stand a queen among the royal nations of the world, with the fair diadem of righteousness upon her brow.

Men at last discovered the thought of God in the creation of the world. The greatest discovery of all the ages it remained for this century to make, shall I say it was found in an old book, in which are contained the 'cathedrals of thought and of faith,' and which has become the classic and rule of our time?—a discovery of the worth and dignity of man. Hitherto there had been diligent search in the bottom of the ocean for pearls. Suddenly there began to be a great enthusiasm in the search for pearls in men. Men went every whither, often risking their lives, in search of them. They worked among the unpolished and ignorant and degraded, as they had once worked upon some rough stone, cutting and polishing the

crystal within it. With what enthusiasm of delight they watched the soul as it began to shine. And now the world is everywhere brilliant with jewels such as no Kohinor could ever match, jewels that have in them the marvelous power of gaining a higher lustre as the years go by, and that shall shine with a celestial splendor in the city of God.

Oh! blessed men and women, that set themselves to do the work for which the ages were waiting. And blessed are we that have lived in this glad century. What shall the next century be but the fulfillment of the Apocalyptic vision, the coming down of the new Jerusalem out of heaven?

The speaker ceased. The vast congregation, till then listening with rapt stillness, suddenly burst into singing the magnificent Hallelujah Chorus of Handel's Messiah, "Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah!" Such a burst of hallelujahs we never heard.

The song ended, and the last echo died away. Presently the sky above seemed to grow ruddy with the deepening feet of angels, and the air was tremulous with song. Strains of music, other-world harmonies, floated down, which by and by gathered itself

into words and sang, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will to men."

Ever since that time we have understood what is the great work of this century.

