

**THE DANGER OF GREAT CONVENTIONS.**

It seems strange that scarcely any great movement connected with Christian religion can be started, without there being carried into it the views and teachings of some of those who are not sound in the faith. A striking fact about it, too, is that those who advocate the unsound views are very apt to forge to the front, and sometimes actually get into control.

The wisdom of selecting Tokyo as the place for holding the recent World Sunday School Convention was questioned by many, but there were few who thought as many troubles would be developed by it as have arisen.

The Philadelphia Presbyterian treats this subject in an editorial, which ought to show the importance of these great gatherings being under control of the Church. They claim to represent the Church, but are not controlled by it, nor are they responsible to it. This is the editorial:

There is at present abroad in the world a very persistent propaganda of naturalistic religion. It begins with the religious faculty in man as a natural gift. Anything that satisfies a man's religious instinct is true religion. This may vary as the man changes, and the best and final religion will appear with the development of man by comparison and selection of the best from the religions of the world.

This naturalistic conception is directly opposed to the Revealed Religion, or Christian faith. This naturalistic religion cannot live by itself, but is always an intruder in Christianity, and as a propaganda ever seeks to destroy the exclusive claims of Christ as God and Saviour and the revelation of the Bible as the only infallible rule of faith and practice.

The recent World's Sunday School Convention at Tokyo seems to have been predominated by these naturalistic teachers. The editor of the Sunday School Times, Mr. Charles G. Trumbull, who attended the convention, has written up his observations and experiences in connection with the convention. Mr. Trumbull's long experience in Sabbath-school work and his large knowledge of Christian faith, qualify him to speak with exceptional ability on this matter. According to his account, the naturalistic spirit appeared constantly. The convention hall was built and was to be presented by the Confucianists and Shintoists and Buddhists of Japan. It included the symbols of heathenism, such as owls and bats, and had in front of it a statue of Christ blessing the little children. It was a great grief to some of the earnest native Christians to note this apparent fellowship between the heathenism of Japan and the Christianity of the convention. They could regard it as nothing but a suppression of the testimony to the exclusive Kingship and Lordship of Jesus. This same naturalistic party presented oil portraits of the emperor and empress and bowed before them. They might deny the intention to worship in this action, but the Japanese understood it as worship, and so they virtually said to these people that they recognized their gods, and so caused them to stumble, contrary to the instruction of the Apostle Paul. At another time these naturalists extended greetings to and entered into full fellowship with a Buddhist Sunday-school rally. They also attended a dinner given for them by the Buddhists on Convention Sabbath. One of the leading officials had been approached to endorse the attendance on this rally and dinner, but he positively refused, and he declared that if such were endorsed, he would at once withdraw. Nevertheless, in face of all this, the naturalists

carried out their propaganda. In presenting a wreath to the convention, a Japanese educator declared: "Our aims and yours are exactly the same: the advancement of civilization." A Japanese paper declared: "One of the by-products of the World's Sunday School Convention is the approach of Buddhism and Christianity." There were but few delegates from Korea. One of them, a gray-bearded Korean pastor, told of the sufferings and the faithful testimony of his people. His short address gave intense concern in the convention, and while they let him speak his allotted time, he was promptly signalled to close. The official badge worn at the convention was a combination of the Shinto torii or temple gate and the Bible, and so became an emblem of the union of Christianity and Shintoism. These and other instances show the work done by believers in a naturalistic religion, at the World Sunday School Convention. It is another case of where the desire for a big world program blotted out the testimony and denied the faith. This was not done under impulse off-guard, but deliberately and intently. We understand that these things were not the official action of the convention, but intrusions of the propagandists. It surely is time that the line of separation be distinct between those who believe in Christ as our only God and Saviour and those who deny this faith. To continue this confusion is to destroy the testimony, make false witness, and cause the weak everywhere to stumble and fall.

Writers who were well informed on economical, political and religious conditions in the Far East, in the pages of the Presbyterian advised and entreated that the convention be not held in Tokyo, and foretold that Japan would take advantage of it to join herself up to other faiths and to advertise her high purpose, to the disadvantages of other adjacent peoples and the work of Christian missionaries in the Far East. The plea was ignored, and the convention was carried out with fearful results.

**DOING DIFFICULT THINGS.**

What boy is there who has not buttoned his coat tight, and stepped out into a snow-storm and faced it with a positive delight?

There is something joyous in defying the storm-king, in overcoming the difficulties.

Who is it that is asking for an easy task? What coward is there that is whining, "I can't do it"? There is more positive joy in tackling a big task, facing undaunted, a great and dangerous piece of business. So men go whistling and singing into battle, cheering and shouting toward the North Pole.

There is an element of the heroic in human nature. We can imagine the fierce joy that filled the hearts of the Vikings as they pushed out into the icy waters of the northern Atlantic Ocean. God pity the man, minister or business man, who wants the ease of an assured success.

Now it seems the Church of God is facing the most tremendous task it has ever had since the days of the Roman Emperor. It must tranquillize and save the disturbed and Bolshevik nations of the world. A second Anti-Christ has arisen; and the anti-Christian principles are sweeping the world.

They are permeating our own nation. They must be met and fought with the sword of the Spirit in our Southland, as well as elsewhere.

There never was a time when the message of the gospel fell on such dull and opposed ears as now. Our churches have few, if any, of the unsaved in the pews. The message does not carry any power from prestige, or

Church authority. Men are openly flaunting the words of Jesus Christ and making Marxian Socialism the Bible of the masses.

Too many of us, bolstered about in our pulpits or professors' chairs, are droning away to already persuaded men, and the rushing tide is pouring along our streets and over our country ways untouched.

The Church has no conception of the task ahead of her. And the watchmen on the walls are, too many of them, singing lullabies, instead of sounding the charge.

It is a harder task than the Apostles had. They brought a positive gospel to a negative world, a world wearied and sated and despairing. We have to take a gospel that has been shorn of many of its militant features by Higher Criticism, and popular demands, to a world of positive and fierce Radicalism. It calls for all the heroic in us. Are we ready for it? Are we going out with a joy of conflict in our souls to breast and beat down this storm? Are we ready to set out with singing on what seems "a forlorn hope"?

Unless there is more of the delight of doing difficult things in our souls, we are not ready. If ever there was a time when the whole world ought to have the whole gospel, now is the time. The kingdom of God must spread over the whole world and dominate the hearts of men, or perish in a perishing world. The leading statesman of South China says to Mr. Brockman, "China must have religion, or China will perish." It is just as true of America, and of the rest of the world. Yet with all the effort, we are moving at a snail's pace, while the forces of evil are traveling at the rate of men.

Because of a little business depression we are dropping behind in furnishing the sinews of war. Our Foreign and Home Mission Secretaries both tell us of such a drop in receipts, promised and pledged last spring, that they are both facing heavy debt and necessary curtailment. Is this any time for God's people to drop back? Is this any hour for economizing in the Lord's work, in the salvation of the world?

A still more serious falling off is in the number of choice men offering for the work? The cry is for men; not men who love and loll in the luxuries of the world, but true soldiers of Jesus Christ, who can and will endure hardness with a smiling face and joyous song. God give us men who are willing like Abraham of old to leave all for the Kingdom of God sake.

In our own beloved Zion we are facing a difficult task indeed. Our goal for additions on profession of faith is fifty thousand during 1921-1922. That is about 22 per cent. That it is an easy thing to do, it would be foolish to say. It means humbling ourselves in prayer, getting close to the divine source of power, and then going forth with faith and perseverance and tact to preach the word. We will have to revolutionize our ideas, and our habits. We have gotten into ruts, and are satisfied with one or two, where we ought to expect and pray for hundreds of souls.

Our goal for gifts is higher than last year. Too many of us are thinking of cutting down our benevolent gifts. "They are superfluous, and only to be given when times are good and money plentiful."

Here is the time for real sacrifice. Here is the opportunity to do a difficult thing. Here is the hour when we must breast the storm and find joy in doing the really hard and heroic thing.

Are we worthy of the task and of the Christ Who did the most difficult thing in all history?

A. A. L.