

# World Missionary Conference, 1910

*(To consider Missionary Problems in relation to the Non-Christian World)*

## THE HISTORY AND RECORDS OF THE CONFERENCE

TOGETHER WITH  
ADDRESSES DELIVERED AT THE  
EVENING MEETINGS

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## THE EXTENT AND CHARACTERISTICS OF GERMAN MISSIONS

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*Address delivered in the Assembly Hall on Friday  
Evening, 17th June*

PROTESTANTISM has not developed into one Church organisation. That is why its opponents have kept declaring for four centuries that it will soon die. There are hundreds of Churches and no one can tell how many more will arise.

For Protestant missions this peculiarity of Protestantism is of great importance. With us there is no *congregatio de propaganda fide* which gives directions for the choice of missionary fields and missionary ways, and we shall never possess such a central authority. Like Protestantism itself, Protestant missions have been built up on the principle of freedom. Nevertheless, they show when compared with Catholic missions a relative uniformity. This is most remarkable, considering that every Missionary Society proceeds quite independently, and can do and leave undone as it likes. On the other hand, this uniformity is not astonishing, because Protestantism in spite of its varieties gives the nations that have adhered to it in Europe and America a singleness of character that is rooted in singleness of faith.

But there are also differences, both in the conception of the aims of missions and in the method of work. Every nation has its own character, its superiorities and its weaknesses, its gifts and its limitations, and it is just the working together of these many forces in the service of the

propagation of the Gospel that makes the richness of Protestant missions.

In approaching the task of describing the peculiarity of German missions, I have to make two preliminary remarks. A thorough scientific treatment of the subject would require me first to consider the points in which all Protestant missions harmonise, and then to state the peculiarity of German missions. There is no time for this. Secondly, I beg you to remark that the words "German missions" represent as little a fixed quantity as the expressions "English missions" or "American missions." In saying so, I do not only think of the differences given by the different countries where missions are at work, nor of those only that result from the shorter or longer duration of missionary work; no, I think also of the peculiar interests, which are alive in the different Missionary Societies. So, in trying to characterise German missions as a unity, I am well aware of the fact that the representative of each Missionary Society would, perhaps, under the visual angle of his own society, accentuate differently many a point, show it in a different light.

What I say here is not an official declaration in the name of our German Missionary Societies; it is only the result of some observations which I, as a friend of missions, have made in studying German missions.

I will first try to characterise our missionary affairs at home and then the peculiarities of our work in the mission field.

## I

1. I begin by stating the important fact, that, in general, it is not the Protestant churches but the so-called Missionary Societies that carry on mission work. There are, indeed, some Free Churches which consider missions a function of the Church (Moravians, Baptists, the Hanoverian Lutheran Free Church), but among these only the Moravians, pioneers of missions from the time of Zinzendorf, have shown considerable activity. By far the greater part of our actual German mission work is done by members of German State Churches.

As these State Churches for a long time showed reluctance or indifference towards missions, the friends of the latter among their members were compelled to take the matter into their own hands, and did so by creating Missionary Societies. As this form of organisation was successful, and as corporations with self-administration allow greater mobility and initiative than State Churches, which are exposed to the dangers of bureaucracy, this policy of uniting the friends of missions into societies was kept up even when the time came when Church Boards adopted that friendly attitude towards missions which they are now everywhere manifesting.

The boundaries of the different societies are not identical with the boundaries of our churches. We do not have societies for Prussia, Saxony, or Bavaria. The principle of division is given by the different religious groups and opinions. The result is that every society has members in different churches.

The greater number of the more important societies found directly or indirectly their origin in the quickening of religious life at the beginning of the nineteenth century. That is why to this day the keynote of a considerable part of our mission life is "Pietism." Other societies were founded when a new understanding of the value of the Lutheran Confession in contrast to the Reformed faith grew up. In the middle of the nineteenth century the starting of Home Missions led to the formation of new societies. When at last in 1884 the German Empire entered the list of colonial powers, Protestant Germany followed suit in founding still more societies for the German colonies. At the same time theological liberalism started a mission work of its own. The modern revival movement (*Gemeinschaftsbewegung*), which is so remarkable in our church life, did the same. So that now all groups, parties, and subdivisions of German Protestantism have their own societies, which, unlike each other in organisation and tendency, give a true picture of the manifoldness of our church life.

These numerous societies bear witness to the power of

the triumphantly advancing idea of missions, and are so far a welcome symptom. On the other hand, such division leads to waste of strength and money.

By far the greater part of all German mission work lies now in the hands of the eight oldest societies (Moravians [1732], Bâle [1815], Berlin [1824], Rhenische [1828], North German [1836], Leipsic [1836], Gossner [1836], Hermannsburg [1849]). They are helped by eighteen other societies. Since 1877 the number of German societies has been trebled. Let us hope there will be no more new societies, and that the present ones will find it possible to become more closely connected. It would be premature to say that the "Committee for German Missions" had already solved this problem.

2. The words "Missionary Training College" cover an important part of our missionary life. This institution results from a quite definite comprehension of the word "missionary," and influences strongly the ways of our mission work. I know well that other countries have training colleges for missionaries; but they have not the same importance as with us. In England and in America the name of missionary is given to all who give themselves to the service of missions. In doing so they do not enter a new, a particular calling; they only change the scene of their activity. This applies to the preacher, the teacher, the medical man, the workman. They devote a few years to the mission in practising their own calling in its service; and when, for any reason, they leave the mission, they return to their own country, continuing work there as preachers, teachers, medical men, and so on. Not a few indeed remain permanently in the mission work, and the example of Alexander Mackay in Uganda shows that even an engineer may do evangelising work.

This proceeding has several advantages; it facilitates the task of gaining men and women for mission work, and puts sometimes a missionary society in the happy position of having a choice among a larger number of persons. But with this method the getting together of a missionary staff may be influenced by chance. Special preparation

for mission work is wanting. It is not likely that every one of the before-mentioned persons will feel obliged to learn the language of the natives. It is difficult in this way to get fixed traditions for missionary work.

It is otherwise in Germany. There the work of the missionary is considered a special calling, selected for a lifetime, and differing from every other calling. Its character is a purely religious one, and involves preaching, pastoral office, and the administration of sacraments. We, too, send out teachers, medical men, and artisans; but we do not—strictly speaking—call them missionaries; they are rather missionary helpers.

The consequence of missionary work being with us a calling for life is, that nearly all Missionary Societies have set up establishments, where young people—about eighteen to twenty-four years of age—are given in a course of six years a complete professional training. The great amount of labour and money required by these institutes is gladly sacrificed by the Missionary Societies, because, according to our experience, this system has great advantages. During this long time of training, not only the young man's religious and intellectual qualifications as well as his character may be tested, but also the special intellectual outfit for his calling is given to him. We so attain an intellectual and professional homogeneity of missionaries, which is of great importance for the homogeneity of our whole mission work. As only those are received in the seminary who wish to make mission work their calling, it is not usual with us to send out missionaries for a limited time.

This college education is undoubtedly exposed to some dangers. Perhaps a few helpers are lost to the mission, who with the English system—to call it shortly so—would have easily found an opportunity to serve it. We also are aware of the fact that the college training may lead to one-sidedness. So the subject is much discussed in Germany with a view to finding the most expedient form. There are difficult problems: the quantity of information to be given to the pupils; the intellectual standard of instruction; the relation to the general knowledge and

intellectual culture of our day ; the teaching of languages, and so on. If the number of pupils were to grow considerably, the question would arise, whether one should not attempt, during the last year of their tuition, to make them specially acquainted with the language, the history, and the religions of the mission field to which each of them was to be sent.

3. The manner in which in Germany the interest for missions is propagated also bears an individual character. I do not speak here of the literary work to be found in all countries, nor of the reports of missionary progress given by church papers, nor of the numerous missionary associations whose task it is to find the required money—all that is to be found everywhere. But I think we may consider specifically German what follows :—

Our aim is not only to win individual mission friends and to join them in associations, but we try to lead the church communities or parishes to the conviction that mission work is a Christian duty and so to make them helpers of missions. That is why in Sunday schools, and during the instruction given to candidates for confirmation, the subject of missions is brought near to our children. That is also why special services are held for missions, and on certain Sundays missionary sermons are preached. In most parishes, once a year, missionary festivals are arranged, where open-air festivities follow the church service. They are much in favour, and are the only popular fêtes Protestantism has introduced in Germany. In our Synods missionary reports are given—in short, we try to give the mission a prominent place in church life.

Generally a parish interest in missions will depend on the view the clergyman takes. We have reason to be very grateful to clergymen on that point. But they might do still more. With a view to this, Dr. Warneck summoned the first "Missionary Conference" at Halle in 1879, when a new way was found of propagating a thorough knowledge and understanding of missions, by means of scientific lectures followed by discussions. On those occasions problems and difficulties are openly discussed, which would not be suitable

for larger congregations. And our experience has been that this arrangement has greatly promoted the study of missions. From the first the intention was not to work during these meetings in the interest of one society only, but to pick out from the history and practice of all societies the points and questions likely to promote love and understanding for mission work. Very similar to the missionary conferences is the mission week at Herrnhut, where every third year the deputies of numerous Missionary Societies meet. On this spot, alive with truly missionary spirit, they give, before an audience of hundreds of clergymen from all parts of Germany, their reports on the affairs and progress of evangelisation. Further, there are missionary reading courses for clergyman and teachers arranged by some of the Missionary Societies, which are held at their mission-houses. These arrangements also have been a great success.

The attempt to start a missionary movement amongst laymen, as in America, has been less successful. The theologian is brought into contact with missions long before he becomes a clergyman, even during the time of his studies, the time of his university life. I think I am not mistaken in the belief that the treatment of mission matters in the university is peculiar to Germany.

Will you, please, realise that the faculties of divinity in Germany are not private institutions dependent upon certain churches, but that they are parts of the universities, maintained by the State. So they have the same freedom of instruction as the other university faculties. I purposely accentuate this independence of the faculties, in order to show that the fact of mission subjects being treated in university lectures is not due to any pressure from the church, but rather proves a free recognition of the importance of missions on the part of theological science. I do not mean to say that this appreciation is a general one; but we have gained a good deal of ground in this direction during the last twenty years. Of course, in a German university, missions can only become a subject of teaching on condition that they are treated in a truly scientific way. Our notion of universities would not allow the treatment of the subject

in a merely practical or edifying manner. Lectures are not sermons. We are convinced that missions can stand scientific enquiry, and that they will profit by it.

The task of science on this point is a triple one. First, to describe the development of missions, the sum of the constituent factors, and the results of the work. This means writing the history of missions, honestly and in a matter-of-fact way, without apology or dyeing in fine colours. We may rely upon the power of facts; and the impression of the history of Christianity is the more imposing the less the reader has the feeling that the historian tries to be an advocate. Secondly, theology has the task of working out the difficult missionary problems, which are not to be solved by practice; that is, it has to fix the theories of missions. Lastly, it is the duty of theology to examine the relations between Christianity and the religions it comes into contact with; that means, Theology has to study Comparative Religion. On all these points work has been started. It is the merit of Dr. Warneck to have recognised the importance of this connection between theology and missions, and to have laboured accordingly.

I may add that for two years in the Colonial Institute of Hamburg also lectures are given on mission subjects. It was interesting for me to read a few weeks ago in the *British Weekly*—Robert Drummond has written it—that neither in the Royal Colonial Institute nor in the Imperial Institute in London has a similar course ever been held, and that this was to be considered an omission.

So our missionary life at home is ruled by the notion that we will do thorough work and not be content with enthusiastic emotion.

Our work in the mission field follows the same principle.

## II

If in this assembly we were to ask every one present, "What is the aim of missions?" we should get many different answers, but we certainly all would unite in the one notion that missions have to propagate the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

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There are great differences possible on this common ground, as past and present times prove.

1. During the second half of the nineteenth century in Germany the notion has almost generally been accepted that the aim of missions is the founding of national Churches. Pietism did not recognise this ideal. Its ultimate purpose was to lead the heathen individually to God and to gather them into small communities, well shut off from their heathen surroundings.

The power of heathendom could never have been broken in this way. At the best a great number of such "ecclesiolæ" would have been possible. It was a great advance when the conviction prevailed that Christianity in new countries, as in the old ones, was to penetrate customs and manners, to fill with its spirit all circumstances of life, family, law, all social contracts, and to influence popular thinking and feeling; that it was the right and the duty of converted natives to govern themselves and to help to propagate the Gospel.

A nation is not only the sum of individuals, gathered under one government; the nation as a unity possesses forces that are only called into life through the contact of its members; produces a feeling of community that can become very powerful, and owns peculiar traits, that prove the fact that man is not only an individual but also a social being. That is why evangelisation of nations has become our aim. We well know that a mission does not always come into contact with "nations" in the true meaning of the word. It works also among tribes and parts of nations. Under the touch of European culture, as well as through their own weakness, national unions are broken up, and new groups are formed. The problem of the missionary aims will take other shapes under a heathen government than under a European one; it is one thing to have to do with a rising nation and another to work among a dying one; there is a great difference between work in India, China, and Africa; in short, many modifications will be required. All the same, the end aimed at remains: not only to bring the gospel of peace to individuals and communities, but to

enable whole nations to develop their peculiar gifts under the influence of Christianity, and to take their independent position in the process of mankind's development towards God. As yet we have no native Christian churches able to govern themselves, and we have every reason to be cautious with any declaration of independence. A want of discretion on this point may destroy the work of long years. Some nations will most likely never reach the stage of development required for self-government. Our most advanced German native churches are in South Africa and in the West Indies, in British India, and among the Battaks in Sumatra.

2. The before-mentioned aim of missions made a systematic education of natives the leading principle of all mission work.

The first thing is to get acquainted with the people in question, and to that purpose it is indispensable that the missionary should understand and speak the language of the country. As the native nationality is to become the bearer of Christianity, it is not to be destroyed but to be preserved as much as possible, that is as far as it is compatible with Christianity. Germans do not find it difficult to acknowledge the peculiarity of other nations. This is even a danger with us; but in missionary life it becomes an advantage. The temptation to Germanise heathen nations is far from us.

In reading the mission reports of different nations we observe that the means selected to influence the natives are very much alike. Still there are differences. We do not know, for instance, the distinction between members and adherents in our statistics; we attach less importance to the raising of means for the support of churches; we accentuate less the tasks which Bible and Tract Societies have taken upon themselves.

The centre of our work is a thorough instruction of catechumens, a firm handling of church discipline, a careful education of native helpers; in short, the founding of congregations able to become a solid ground for native churches. Besides religious education, we attach great importance to schools, especially elementary or board schools. These schools are the foundation for higher schools and seminaries.

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More than formerly women participate in mission work. They are teachers and nurses. It is in accordance with our German customs that they mostly join the missionaries' families.

As to medical missions, we have for a long time kept in the rear ; but we now have an institute at Tübingen, from which we hope much. As the number of our missionary doctors grows, the question will arise, whether they are to be considered as medical men or as preachers, and perhaps this question will find with us an answer different from that which our English and American friends would give.

3. Thorough work demands time. But this does not exclude mobility in the missionary taking possession of a country. On this point we have undergone great changes. The earlier German mission put all its work in the strengthening of stations. Circumstances would have it so, and the notions Pietism had of Christian communities justified this way theologically. But the drawback of this concentration on a few points only is easily understood ; and as the aims of our mission became higher ones, we have dropped this want of mobility. This is proved by the manner in which the Bâle mission acted in Kamerun ; by the success with which the Rhenish Missionary Society mastered the difficult circumstances in South-West Africa after the revolt ; also by the great energy shown by German missions in East Africa. The new method allows us indeed only a few missionaries in each station ; but the similarity of their systematic studies makes this possible.

4. Anybody knowing German missionary literature, and especially the "general missionary journal" (*Allgemeine Missions Zeitschrift*), will agree with me when I say that German missions are not wanting in self-criticism. We have tried to learn from history and from our mistakes, and are well aware that if our final aim is always the same, the ways leading thereto will differ according to time, circumstances, and personalities : our working methods must undergo changes. But our German matter-of-fact way, and the conviction that only thorough solid work will find lasting success, prevented us from taking up the programme—"the

evangelisation of the world in this generation." We thankfully acknowledge that the great religious energy of the men who devised this watchword has, in a remarkable way, quickened the interest for missions. We rejoice in this enthusiasm, but we cannot join in it.

5. You will wish to hear something about the extent of our missions. We have more than 3700 stations; 1340 missionaries are in active service, assisted by 6098 natives. In our congregations we had, in the year 1908, 550,000 baptized natives, and 50,000 more candidates for baptism. We have more than 3000 schools with 150,000 pupils. We have spent more than 10½ millions of marks.

I shall limit myself to these few numbers, and it is purposely I have put them at the end of my observations. All statistics have something lifeless. The numbers only become living quantities when the circumstances under which they have been won are closely examined; when, for instance, the expenses for missions are compared to the national capital or to the sum of expenses for other church matters; when we compare the number of converts with the difficulties the missionaries met with; when we try to take the actual standard as the result of a long development. We are never sure of possessing in the statistics a reliable indicator of true missionary success. The events most important to us, the mysterious proceedings in the heart of a heathen seeking God, can not be registered in numbers.

Time does not allow me to interpret the short statistics I gave you. I shall restrict myself to the remark that German missions have gone to all parts of the earth, that they are making steady progress, and that the Lord's blessing has been upon them.

It is an œcumenical council that is gathered here. May it send out rays of œcumenical spirit into our work at home and abroad, rays of the spirit of love that embraces the world, that will not rest until every "tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."