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SHANGHAI

CHRISTIAN LITERATURE SOCIETY

1926

THE
CHINA CHRISTIAN
YEAR BOOK
1956

PREFACE

THE China "Mission" Year Book appears this year as the China "Christian" Year Book. This change of title is indicative of a change in emphasis. Up till recently the Christian Movement in China has, of necessity, been mission-centric. It is now becoming China Christian-centric. This process of change has not proceeded very far nor does it move very fast when all phases and types of Christian work in China are considered. Nevertheless a new fulcrum for Christian work in China is being placed in position. Adjustment thereto is proceeding as rapidly as possible.

This year the Editorial Board has attempted to include more articles of a general and survey type than formerly. Success in this regard is not all that was planned or desired. The Christian Movement is somewhat less coherent than it was a few years ago. To this must be added the influence of the social and political upheaval apparent everywhere but particularly in those centres which feel most the impact of the West and are most easily affected by revolutionary influences. School work has been more disturbed than any other type of work. In view, therefore, of the exceptional difficulties abounding special thanks are due to the many writers and friends who assisted in the preparation of the articles in this Year Book. Especially do we appreciate the generous help of those who answered a number of questionnaires sent out by different writers.

In this Year Book a number of features stand out which need only be mentioned here.

(1) The outstanding characteristic of the Christian Movement and its present environment is a *changing mind*. As a result a considerable proportion of space in this Year Book is given up to opinions on the present situation and existing problems. These opinions, however, have their source in experience that is widely scattered and in close contact with "interior" as well as "port city" conditions. Opinions, however, stand out in this volume rather more than programs or achievements. As regards Christian work this changing mind reveals itself in an experimental attitude wherever spiritual life is in evidence.

(2) Much work is going on in spite of existing chaotic conditions. A number of *reconstructive beginnings* are apparent. Little is being done in the way of securing political stability or governmental reform. In education, however, as well as in the study of social problems much effort of a fundamentally reconstructive nature is in evidence. A number of experiments in meeting problems of the religious life and religious education are

also found here and there. Such reconstructive efforts are essential to the laying of the foundations upon which more general social welfare and stability must be built. Some definite efforts to meet the anti-Christian Movement have also emerged. The Y. M. C. A., at its Convention held in Tsinan in August, 1926, planned its message to this particular end. Books and articles by Chinese Christians, aiming to interpret the Christian Movement, have also appeared. Some Chinese educators are also drawing attention to the necessity of including religion in educational programs and in the life of students.

(3) The chief note struck with regards to Christianity, where there is articulation at least, is the desire to understand and follow *Christ's way of life*. This includes another promising sign that, in spite of the comparative lack of cohesion in the Christian Movement as a whole, there is a slowly growing desire and effort to promote Christian fellowship as distinct from and above the claims and efforts of ecclesiastical, denominational or theological unity. It is felt by some that this higher and freer Christian fellowship is possible even though intellectual and ecclesiastical unity is hardly a practical question at the present time.

(4) All the above movements are influenced to some extent by the increasing articulation of the Chinese consciousness about its indigenous problems and the rising impulse of what is called the "Chinese religious genius." This latter impulse is seen in a widespread questioning as to the relation of Christianity to China's religious history and experience. However one may interpret or value these, the fact remains that in the immediate future Christian workers will have to reckon with them and indeed learn to value and utilize them as far as possible.

Difficulties galore confront Christian workers in China. For many of the situations no precedents exist. They will have to be made. This fact is slowly emerging in the consciousness of Christian workers both Chinese and Western. To some extent the intensity of feelings which marked 1925 has subsided. A growing desire and determination to solve existing problems in a Christlike way promises much for the future.

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