



Oct or Sept
1942

THE CHINESE CHIMES

WHITHER? NUMBER

Past Whithers?

Last March the last number of the Chimes was hardly in the mails at Berkeley when a telegram came from Boston to inquire if I would be willing to go to West China by boat across the Atlantic to India and then by Plane to Chungking. A conference with one member in Berkeley, one in Long Beach, and one in Boston was not easily conducted, and resulted in the decision that I would not accept the offer, since, so far as I knew, I would be the only American Board missionary. The proposition was then put up to Jim Hunter, who agreed to go. Since I had been waiting for some months to go if somebody else would go with me, his decision caused me to reverse mine and I wrote to the Board that I hoped Jim and I could go together, but I would go either as Number One or Number Two, if we couldn't go on the same boat.

A few weeks later another telegram informed me that Jim was sailing from an Atlantic port about April 24th and if I could get there, I probably could go with him. As there wasn't time to go by train, I purchased an airplane ticket to New York and flew from Berkeley to Long Beach, expecting to go on in two days. The day after I reached Long Beach I received word from the Board that there was no room for me on that boat and I was to remain in Long Beach for further instruction. My plane ticket was good for four months, so I held on to it, not knowing when another opportunity to start for China might suddenly jump out at me. Four months passed and I had to turn in the ticket. Jim and the others who went with him arrived in China O.K. but the general travel situation became so difficult that it seemed foolish to hope to get to China at least for some months.

A proposition to help at the Bay Shore Community Congregational Church at Long Beach was presented to me and the Board consented to permit me to work there until the end of 1942 if in the meantime no opportunity to go to China appeared. It seemed to us in Long Beach so unlikely that there would be any possibility of my going to China that I was advertised in the local papers as the new assistant at the Bay Shore Church. My cards were printed and I began getting acquainted with the situation. I was calling on church members when a telephone call from New York presented another chance to go to China. As I write these words I am waiting to learn from the Western Air Line whether it is possible to get transportation to the Atlantic Coast in time. The reply will determine "Whither?" I am to go.

Whither?, Sons and Daughters

But I am not unique in being faced with this question of "whither?". Young people are the ones who are most concerned with this problem. I have been free to turn down propositions which have knocked at my door; not so those of the younger generation. Sons are "called up" and "told" where to go without any "if you please" or "by your leave". Not only are they sent to all parts of the country but they are scattered over the seven seas, to all continents, and in many islands which most of us, a few years ago did not know existed.

Daughters consequently are having to fill the places of their brothers in defense plants and many other forms of work that were formerly done solely by man. Women taxi drivers are common in Long Beach and the last time I rode in a taxi my driver was a member of the fair sex. I just couldn't let her take my suit case; she was still a woman in spite of slacks and driver's cap. I think she overcharged me but I didn't have the nerve to raise such a question with a "lady".

Then there are the WAVES and the WAACS and the WIVES, calling to our daughters "come hither". With sons soon to leave for the four corners of the globe daughters are easily persuaded to join one of the groups listed above and one can scarcely see what will be the result or "the end thereof".

It is not merely a war that we are experiencing, it is a world revolution and the changes that are taking place in the position of women stand well toward the top of the list of those most important. As a member of the sex which has tried to rule the world ever since one of us wrote in the first book of the Bible that we had been commanded to "rule over" the weaker sex, I am not very proud of our "administration". Whether our daughters join the WAVES, the WAACS, the WORKS, or the WIVES, let us hope that they will succeed better than their fathers and granddads have done in directing "whither" this old world is headed.

To bring the topic of Sons and Daughters down to our own family we now have a Doctor in our circle. Harold graduated from Harvard Medical last June and is now a very busy interne in the Presbyterian Hospital in Philadelphia. James is at Dartmouth Medical and will finish his second year next February. He has applied for admission at Harvard and hopes that he can take his last two years there. It will be fine for Elizabeth to have him there. She realizes how much it meant last year to have Harold so near. She had a good summer waiting on tables at a hotel on the Maine coast and is enjoying being a sophomore at Wellesley this year. Since she has a six weeks' vacation this winter and James about a month, they are considering the possibility of coming to California to spend Christmas. Their parents have not been very encouraging because of travel conditions but if one of them goes to China there will be more justification for having three of the family together for a few weeks this winter. There will be an opportunity here to earn some money to help defray the cost of the trip.

While I was writing these words a telegram came with the happy news that James and Elizabeth are planning to go to Washington, D.C., to meet me there. Here's hoping that we make connections.

Both the boys are ensigns in the Naval Reserve and Harold expects to be called into service at the end of his first year of internship. Then he will have to face the question of "Whither?".

Whither? Foreign Missions

There can be no doubt that Foreign Missions which have gone "everywhere" during the last century will be forced to face the question of "Whither?", along with many other established agencies and organizations. The very fact that the white man's prestige has been destroyed in the Orient ought to tell us that we have come to the end of an epoch, a very remarkable one in the case of Foreign Missions, and remind us that we can't go on in the future as we have in the past. A new day has arrived. Where are we going to let it lead us?

It is encouraging to learn that mission boards are alert to the new situation and that there will be held in Cleveland, December 6th - 10th, a Christian World Mission Convocation. Note the name, not a Foreign Mission Conference, but a World Mission Convocation. I hope this means that "Foreign" Missions is finished. I have been a "foreigner" for twenty-five years and I am sure that the connotation the word "foreign" carries is not such as to make it a suitable one for Christian missions. "Foreign" is a word that separates people. "Christian" is a word that ought to unite people. To me, Christ is that which makes mankind one with God. So let's show that we are up-to-date and place a substantial marker and beautiful flowers on the spot where lie the remains of our dear old friend "Foreign Missions". Then let us hail

the new daughter "Christian Missions", not only in name, but in act as well. She has a tremendous task to perform in the world that is being born. Will she be able to meet the new burdens and responsibilities? At least three large denominations have voted to seek an unusually large group of new missionaries for the work that will need to be done as soon as peace is again restored. You young men and women who want your lives to count for much and who want your children to grow up in a world where cooperation and understanding and appreciation will help to unite the nations and the races of the world please consider this call that mission boards are making. Youth is responding by the millions to the call for supreme sacrifice. Will others not respond as splendidly to the call to "live" so that another world war will be impossible.

I wish that the name "Foreign" might be removed from all mission boards that are to meet in Cleveland next December. I wish that they might all actually become united into a single organization which would do away with the overlapping that the present denominational organizations necessitate but my faith is not too strong in that respect. Perhaps the only way that such a step in advance could be accomplished would be for a large number of societies which are interested in Christian Missions to deluge the Convocation with requests that such a step in unity be taken at this time. It would mean much toward answering Jesus' prayer "That they may be one".

But don't think that Cleveland is the only place where effective work can be done. Begin right in your own church. If you have a "Foreign" Missions committee or society show that you are alive and up-to-date by changing the name to some such term as "World Fellowship", something that connotes a process of integration instead of disintegration, a process of cooperation instead of separation.

Whither? Mankind

The most rewarding and stimulating book that I have read since I wrote the last issue of the Chimes is John Macmurray's "Cue to History". His thesis is that God works in History. He works in a definite direction. He has an "intention" which he is persistently carrying out. Since he has given men a certain amount of freedom, God can only realize his "intention" as he gets man's cooperation. Man, on the other hand, can realize his "intentions", his aims, his purposes as they coincide with those of God. Man can leave the way (the Tao as the Chinese call it) that God has marked, to answer questions of "Whither?" as did the Prodigal Son, but sooner or later he will come to himself and realize that he has made a wrong choice.

After having read Macmurray and having written a paper on Macmurray's contribution to the idea of God, for Dr. Bennet, in whose seminar I was enrolled, I had just started on another paper on "God's Judgment in History". I had read considerable interesting material on that subject and had written the introduction to my paper when I received the telegram which took me away from Berkeley on what I thought was a trip to China. In my introduction I defined the three nouns in my subject as follows: "History is that which happens to man, and God is that which causes History to happen. Judgments are the harvests of History. Men and nations are free to sow what seeds they will in the fields which God provides, waters, and causes to bring forth harvests. Whatsoever a man or a nation sows that will he also reap, is today being made real to us. We are reaping exactly what we sowed.

I heard Walter Judd put it graphically when I heard him speak last winter in the San Francisco Opera House packed with teachers, superintendents and other important people. He said: "You can sometimes slap a man in the face without getting any come-back; you can sometimes hand a man a revolver without experiencing any bad results from it; but you don't do both those things to the same man unless you are very stupid." We slapped Japan in the face with our exclusion laws and later we sold her all the materials she needed for making her "revolver". Now we are getting the bullets back in the bodies of our sons. One might picture our treatment of Germany in the same way. We tried to make her pay for World War I and then our bankers loaned her money which she used to start her "revolver". The seed that we have sown is showing up in the harvest.

But don't forget that not all the seed has been bad. The tares have certainly yielded a hundred or thousand fold, but there is also considerable wheat. While the world has been falling to pieces, there have also been developing some bonds to help hold it together. We are being made conscious today as never before that we really, not just theoretically, are an integral part of the world. Isolationism is decidedly out of date. The United Nations are proving that nations can no longer live in this world as separate units. There is being born a World Council of Churches which is actually functioning before it is formally organized. These are many evidences that remind us that there is a power that shapes our destinies, rough how them how we may. Let us husband this precious seed and see that it is planted in the hearts of men and cultivated and cared for so diligently that it may bring forth a hundred or a thousand fold, so that the next harvest may prove that we have been better husbandmen than the case now stands against us.

As I draw this to a close I can announce that I have sold my car, bought an airplane ticket to Chicago, have funds to purchase another plane ticket, or if necessary a railway ticket to the Atlantic Coast. If all goes as I hope it will, my next address will be

Ming I School
Chin Tang
Szechwen, China

May I leave as my closing prayer one that I have used often during the past two years in my talk on Spiritual Bridges.

Build thee more stately bridges,
O my soul,
As the swift waters roll
Leave thy narrow past,
Let each new cable
Longer than the last,
Bind thee to others
With a span more vast,
Till thou at length art free
Made one, through Christ,
With all Humanity.

H. W. Robinson