

**BAPTISTS
AND THE GREAT
WAR**



**AMERICAN BAPTIST
FOREIGN MISSION SOCIETY
BOSTON**

“**T**HERE is still another war being waged in the Orient concerning which America cannot and does not proclaim herself neutral—the war of Christian love, directed against all obstacles, for the ultimate reign of Jesus Christ as King in the lives of this mighty eastern host.”

M. L. STREETER,
Missionary in Burma.

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THE results of the Great War in Europe are being felt throughout the world, even in the most remote regions. These results are not confined to political, industrial, and commercial affairs, but are profoundly affecting religious and particularly missionary work. Business has been greatly depressed, and in some countries in which Baptist missionaries are working has been well nigh suspended. The cost of living, and hence the cost of conducting missionary work, has increased. Building projects in the Far East have had to be abandoned, in some cases because Europeans residing there who had promised to help financially have been drawn into one or the other of the contending armies. Difficulty has been experienced in the prompt and economical transmission of funds to the several mission fields, and in the case of some boards missionary recruits ready to sail have been held back. Actual hostilities have taken place in some non-Christian lands, as in eastern China, South Africa, the Kameruns, South Pacific Islands, and other places. Mission boards in America have not yet begun to suffer seriously from diminished receipts, but if the war should continue for any length of time and the depression in business should increase, a lessening of income will probably follow. Foreign missionary organizations with head-

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quarters in France, Germany, Belgium, and Great Britain must find it increasingly difficult to secure funds and conduct their work.

In the mean while appeals for funds to relieve the physical distress of the people in the war zone will multiply. Multitudes in England, America, and other lands who find themselves without work or are otherwise affected by war conditions must be provided for, physically and spiritually. The situation is appalling, looked at from any point of view, and should challenge the sympathy and benevolence of men and women everywhere, irrespective of their religious convictions.

While Europe is not technically "foreign" mission territory, many representatives of foreign mission boards have been working there and other boards assist the churches and institutions of their respective denominations very much as home mission boards in this country assist needy churches. The American Baptist Foreign Mission Society belongs to this latter class of organizations, having been accustomed for many years to make appropriations to Baptist committees in the several countries of Europe for such distribution as might be agreed upon. In this way money contributed by Baptists of the North has been helping to sustain and extend the work in France (including Belgium and Switzerland),

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Germany (including Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria and Rumania), Sweden, Norway, Russia, Finland, Denmark, and Spain. There are nearly as many Baptists in Europe as in all the non-Christian lands of the world combined, the figures for 1913 giving 1,182 churches, 2,483 preachers, and 139,270 members, with perhaps twice as many adherents and sympathizers. More than 275,000 converts have been baptized since the Society began work in Europe, in 1834.

More than one half of this membership is in the countries actively engaged in the struggle. Russia, including Finland, has 235 churches with 32,090 members; Germany, 209 churches with 42,940 members, and France 35 churches with 2,123 members. The remainder of the Baptist constituency is found in Spain, Denmark, and the Scandinavian countries, Sweden alone having 627 churches and over 54,000 members. There are also six theological seminaries on the continent, one each in Russia, France, Germany, Denmark, and the two Scandinavian countries, with a total of 121 students. At Cassel, Germany, is a Baptist publishing house which is a great aid in scattering good literature.

Letters from pastors in Europe emphasize the serious distress of our institutions in that land. Churches are depleted, many closed, because pastors and the able-bodied men are at the front. Four of our churches in France have sent

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140 men to the army; in Germany even the smallest churches have as many as twenty or thirty men in the service of the Emperor, while in churches of from five hundred to a thousand members the number is as high as eighty or even a hundred or more. Many of these men have left their families destitute, later to be driven from their homes. We have two churches in Belgium; one at Liege between two of the forts and the other at Charleroi, a large portion of which has been burned. In East Prussia and Austria-Hungary churches have been completely scattered and buildings destroyed. In the Hamburg Theological Seminary there are possibly not more than ten of the fifty-five students who do not belong to the army.

Ability of the members of the churches to sustain their work or to secure help locally has greatly diminished or ceased altogether. It is impossible to estimate the seriousness of this situation. Even should peace be declared soon, the churches will be so weakened in numbers and the members will be in such privation and poverty that probably the entire work will need to be reorganized.

In this crisis Baptists of America have a twofold duty. One of our pastors writes, "Ask the people in America, the true Christian people, to pray for Europe. This may be the new birth of the old world, if the Church is faithful to her

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trust." Thus Baptists are urged to pray, in public and in private, that a permanent peace founded on love and justice may soon be established. Pray that this terrible warfare may teach men their dependence upon the Infinite. "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem." This is an especially favorable time in which to present with confidence those views of gospel truth held by Baptists. The personal experience of a living Christ is what men need, as well as a respect for the rights of others. Only those imbued with the ideas of a true spiritual democracy can inculcate these fundamental principles.

But with our prayers should go our gifts. This is the hour for sacrifice. Others are sacrificing everything for their flags. Surely American Christians who believe that this war does not mark the downfall of Christianity, but that instead it will result in a greater diffusion of the spirit of Christ throughout the world, should give more for the work of the Kingdom. Billions of dollars are being voted for war. Shall not our churches freely give the small amount needed to sustain and strengthen our great work? The Society has during recent years been compelled to reduce the support given to the work in European countries. To make further reduction would be fatal. In fact unless we can increase our appropriations we must decrease our work.

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In view of this need, and the greater need that will be felt after the war is over, churches are urged to meet their full apportionments, and so far as possible exceed them in order that the Society may be in a position to provide generously for the present situation in Europe, and also plan for a larger work in the future, there and in other fields. For while we sympathize with the brethren in Europe we must not forget the missionaries and churches in non-Christian lands. Furthermore, our missionaries in these lands will in all probability be called upon to assist the missionaries of English and European organizations whose workers cannot be re-enforced under the circumstances.

Gifts for the regular work of the Society or special gifts toward the European relief fund may be sent to any District Secretary, or to Ernest S. Butler, Treasurer, Box 41, Boston, Mass.

For additional literature or other information regarding the work of the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society, write to any of the following :

- The nearest District Secretary.
- Department of Missionary Education, 23 East 26th St., New York City.
- Literature Department, Box 41, Boston, Mass.

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