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YOU AND CHRISTIAN LITERATURE

by Robert Walker, in "Christian Life"

Popular Topic of conversation in evangelical Christian circles today is Christian literature. This is good and proper, but talking is not enough.

I'd like to ask, "What are you doing about it?"

So vast is the subject of Christian literature and so vital has it become that it affects all walks of life. Pastor, missionary, Christian worker, layman—no matter who we are, we are all involved. In missionary circles, it is providing fresh incentive for the thrust of the gospel in our day. In desperate haste, mission boards are setting up literature committees, launching studies.

On the field, low-cost, popularly-slanted magazines are being started by missionaries to reach the man on the street. On their pages, the gospel is plainly presented, along with practical suggestions on health, baby care, and brightly-written news and feature material.

At home, far-sighted churches and church organizations are picking up the torch. Some are writing missionary literature into their budgets. Others are seeing that the potential of Christian literature is presented in their missionary conferences and conventions.

Such emphasis is paying out in many ways. A California church the other day sent \$1,500 to Japan to finance the publication of the first evangelical Bible commentary in the Japanese language.

A few Christian colleges and Bible institutes and seminaries are recognizing the need for providing courses on subjects relating to Christian literature. Although their number is still small, more are seeing the need each year. One well-known college has set up a major in Christian literature.

The Christian literature snowball process started several years ago on the mission field where missionaries suddenly discovered that a rising tide of nationalism was curtailing their activities. Previously, they had found that natives were willing to put up with their poor efforts at the language or read hastily-translated English books on the gospel, in order to hear what the foreigner had to say. Now they have discovered that the proud national wants to read or hear his language in the true idiom of his own people. He is no longer interested in the white man's culture; he wants his own. Moreover, in some areas the missionaries' ability to travel the areas where the gospel had not been preached is limited by government restrictions. Here, literature often proves to be the only means by which the message of Christ can be proclaimed.

At the same time, Christians at home have come to the staggering realization of the peril of obnoxious literature in their homes and churches. Suddenly engulfed by the miasma of smutty, obscene, objectional literature which floods the newsstands, bookstores and mails, some have struck out blindly. Still others, with the help of churches and civic organizations, have seen fruit for their labors.

In a few cities, vigilant committees have been able to stem the tide. But often for every newsstand that is cleaned up or pornographic publisher put out of business, a dozen spring up in their places.

Meanwhile, in some homes and churches, determined efforts have been made to replace objectionable literature with Christian books and magazines.

All of this is encouraging. But all too often the individual Christian hides behind the cloud of dust stirred up by such activity. A few Christian leaders here and there have been roused into action. But the subject is so vast that successfully to employ the tremendous potential of Christian literature today, complete mobilization of the church of Jesus Christ must be accomplished.

This means that each individual Christian has a responsibility. Here is what you can do about it:

1. Begin at home and with the Word of God. See to it that you have regular daily personal devotions and study the Word of God. See that your family likewise has family devotions centered on the Word of God, with the use of other Christian literature. Subscribe to one or more Christian magazines for yourself and your family. Begin a regular program of building a Christian library for yourself and your family. (Visit your local Christian bookstore for help in the latter.)

2. See that your church has a program to advance the cause of Christian literature. This means a well-staffed and -supplied Christian library. It also means emphases on Christian reading from the pulpit and in the Sunday school. Here again, the balanced program includes Christian magazines and the basic, old-time Christian books as well as current late titles.

3. See that the newspapers serving your community carry news and feature articles on the activities of the evangelical churches—others as well as your own. This means the appointment of a publicity chairman in your church who knows how to write and understands how to prepare material for the press. If other churches do not have qualified persons, you or someone else who has real vision for this ministry can soon make yourself so invaluable to the local newspaper that you may find yourself the religious correspondent or religious editor for the paper. If you have the desire but not the knowledge or experience for such a task, you will find books available in the library on journalism. Also, at least one correspondence course in Christian journalism is available (The Christian Writers Institute, 33 S. Wacker Drive, Chicago 6. Ill.).

4. Become informed yourself on the wider aspects and opportunities of Christian literature, particularly on the mission field. Evangelical Literature Overseas, Wheaton, Illinois—a non-profit agency serving all mission boards—will provide you with helpful background material. As

(Continued on Page 3)