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1933, Extracts from a Letter from Frank Keller to William Nyman

Frank A. Keller

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Recommended Citation

Keller, Frank A., "1933, Extracts from a Letter from Frank Keller to William Nyman" (1933). *HBI Documents*. 25.

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Extracts from a letter
To Mr. William G. Nyman

A few details regarding this work may be of interest to you. We have here in Changsha a large and well-equipped Bible school, we have an exceptionally fine faculty and a choice body of students who have come to us from all parts of China, some of these students have come from the most distant provinces, north and south, east and west. In addition to the students resident here in the school we have over 700 students scattered throughout China and some in other countries who are studying the Bible with us by correspondence. Our regular course of study leading up to graduation and a diploma requires three years of solid work. Our students come from many different denominations. We publish a Christian bi-monthly magazine which has a paid-up circulation of nearly nine thousand. Ten thousand copies of each of the last three issues have been printed and circulated. We are constantly receiving letters from missionaries, Chinese pastors and evangelists and lay workers telling us of the help received from this magazine. Many Chinese pastors have for the first time set up family worship in their homes through the influence of this magazine, they are using the suggestions given in the magazine for their daily family worship. This work had its beginning in the Biola Evangelistic Bands which were started about twenty-four years ago. The Bible School was launched several years later. These bands go out into the fields of various missions on the invitation of those missions to do a work of intensive evangelism in parts of the field where the Gospel has not yet been preached. At the present time we have eight of these evangelistic bands, each band being made of a leader and six evangelists. In the early days the bands consisted of a leader and twelve evangelists. But various conditions in the country and in the work have made it seem desirable to cut down the number of workers in each band. These bands do not go to some established church and hold a short series of meetings and then pass on to some other church, but they locate in some center and go out two-by-two from that center in every direction for about five miles aiming to visit every home in that district and make a personal presentation of the Gospel. As people became interested the evangelists organize them into daily Bible classes, and by the time all the homes in the district have been visited by our evangelists the members of the Bible classes have made good progress in their knowledge of the Word and a number have made a definite decision to follow the Lord Jesus Christ. Before the evangelists pass on to a new district, where conditions are favourable the members of these Bible classes are organized into a "Bible Study and Prayer Group" which you will see is the nucleus of a self-supporting and self-propagating church. The population of this province of Hunan is over 30 millions, you will realize the vastness of our field. A brief summary of the annual report of one of these bands for last year tells the story of them all. Going out two-by-two from four different centers the men of this band made 10,712 visits to heathen homes, leaving with the people Scriptures and Gospel tracts to help them...

[Page 2]

...understand what had been told them. 775 persons manifested a very real interest, and many of these joined daily evening Bible classes that they might learn more of this wonderful salvation. 87 definitely made the great decision to believe in and follow Jesus Christ. Fifteen entire families turned to the Lord and thirty-two families removed all idols from their homes, destroying both idols and all the accompaniments of idolatry. In two of the centers little self-supporting churches have been organized to go on with the work which by God's blessing was initiated by the Biola Evangelistic Band. You ask for

some items of interest regarding the work. I can only stop to give you one item this morning, but hope to send you other items from time to time. This item is connected with the local work of the Bible school and illustrates most strikingly the manifold ways in which God works to accomplish His purposes. Last summer a missionary whose station is in the northern part of one of the most distant provinces wrote us about two students who desired to enter the Bible school. One of these students was only 15 years of age. I at once replied to the missionary telling him that students must be fully twenty years of age before they can be received into the Bible school, therefore the boy of whom he wrote could not be accepted. In some unusual way my letter was delayed enroute and the missionary did not receive it until some five days after the two students have started for Changsha. When they arrived to Changsha we were amazed to see this boy and told him that we have notified his missionary that he could not be received. The boy's home is so far distant that he could not travel back alone and his travelling companion was an evangelist who had made great sacrifice to come to Changsha and take this course of study. How could we insist on his turning around and going back home with this boy? Although so young, the boy, HPH, had done a great deal of study and was very bright and active, in spite of his youth he seemed really qualified to undertake the course of study. The evangelist and boy both pled most earnestly to be allowed to remain here, it did seem as though God's hand was guiding, we had a special faculty meeting and decided that we would permit the boy to remain in the school and attend the classes as an "Auditor", not as a regular student. In Chinese names the surname comes first and the so-called given name last, just as in our own indexes and list of names we enter the family name first as, Smith, John, so this boy's family name is H and his given name is PH. Now for the wonderful sequel to this story and the evidence of God's hand in it all. Little Peh Hsiang is always so bright and happy, it does us good to look into his face every time we meet him, how he does love to be here in the school! But best of all he has received a real spiritual blessing here. When he came to us his father was not a Christian and was not very willing to have the boy come, but he yielded to the influence of others and let him come. Since the boy has been here he has received such blessing that he wrote home to his father confessing some acts of dishonesty that occurred when he was at home and asked his father's forgiveness for them. This letter of confession so touched his father's heart that it convinced him of the truth the power of Christianity and as a result he gave his heart to the Lord Jesus Christ. He at once began to close his shop on Sundays and to...

[Page 3]

...attend church. He wrote a beautiful letter to his boy granting him full forgiveness and telling him that his letter of confession was worth all he had spent to send here to the Bible school. May I commend to you and to the members of the Sunday School this very dear boy? Do join with us in earnest prayer on his behalf, may God lead him out into fuller light and ever deeper devotion and loyalty. The schoolyear is nearly ended, please pray too that God may guide us in deciding about PH's relation to the school next year, the problem is not an easy one, but God is all wise and we are looking to Him for guidance.

Frank A. Keller

[The following is written at the top of page 1]

April 1933