

The Canadian Courier

A National Weekly

Subscription: \$4.00 a Year.

Vol. III.

Toronto, December 7th, 1907.

No. 1

Foreign Missions

WE have fallen upon trouble. In a recent issue, one of our staff commented in a rather unfriendly manner upon the proposal to raise a special \$500,000 for mission work. He took the view that home missions were all right, but Canadians had more important duties than worrying about foreign missions. Since then our mail has been crowded with protests.

Let us say as a beginning that we do not expect to have all our opinions approved by the public. Sometimes the members of the staff disagree—oftener than we would care to admit, perhaps. Our opinions are given for what they are worth, backed up by argument such as the writer can muster in support of his case. Why should we expect to be always right, or why should the public expect us to be always right? When the public disagrees with us, we shall be pleased to publish its opinion.

Two of these letters are selected for publication as indicative of the views of our correspondents. The first is from St. Mary's and runs as follows:

St. Marys, Nov. 27, 1907.

Editor CANADIAN COURIER:

Sir:—In your issue of November 23rd you take the position that it is inadvisable to ask for increased givings to foreign mission work, on the ground that the money is needed at home.

Your argument is practically the same as the one used to prevent Wm. Carey going to the foreign field in the eighteenth century, and if followed to its logical conclusion no foreign field would ever be opened.

On the face of it your argument appears reasonable, but a more close examination of the situation will lead to a different conclusion. The ability of the Christian laymen of this country to give to Christian missions must be counted in millions, not thousands. The natural result, then, of a spirit of missionary effort arising among us is, not that we will find our resources so depleted that we will not be able to increase our givings to home work, but that we will be led to a more careful consideration of our resources, and of our duty, resulting in a large increase of giving to the need at home. Witness the splendid response to the appeal of one Missionary Board this year for a forty per cent. increase in givings, a board of whose income eighty per cent. is devoted to home work. A close examination of givings to all causes of a truly Christian character will reveal the fact that the most liberal toward the missionary cause are also the most liberal to the home cause.

To cut off foreign missionary giving would not result in increased home giving, and though I appreciate that we need both men and money here, I find that a true feeling for the absolute need of the heathen will bring forth more money for our home work.

Sincerely yours,

E. W. WHITE.

The strong part of this letter is the closing paragraph. If the giving of money for foreign missions increases the amount given to home missions the whole question, viewed from a practical standpoint, is solved. We venture, however, to express our dissent. We have studied men and their givings and we believe that most men have a desire to give a certain portion of their income to charitable and religious work. That portion is decided less by a reference to the needs of the call, and more by their ability to give. There are a few people who have never learned to give, and these may be educated to make large gifts by getting them to make small donations. Yet these form but a limited portion of the public. The great body of the public give and give fairly generously. Canadian givings are increasing because the people have more to give rather than because they are being trained to give more.

If this reasoning and these observations are correct, then the more that is given to foreign missions the less will be given to home missions.

Here is the second letter selected for publication, from the principal of the Acadia Seminary, Wolfville, Nova Scotia:

Wolfville, November 24, 1907.

Editor CANADIAN COURIER:

Sir:—In the last issue of your paper, which is gaining in self-consciousness every week, and this is as it should be, you make the state-

ment anent a proposal to raise \$500,000 for spreading the Protestant Gospel among people who have already gospels of their own, implying that such a movement is unwise and unnecessary. Have I taken your thought aright?

With the completer means you have for obtaining information you will probably know of the nations which have a gospel of their own to whom this Gospel called Protestant is to be sent. Kindly inform us. I have made a somewhat careful study of modern religious conditions in so-called heathen lands and am more or less familiar with the religions there taught and practised; and I have been cudgelling my poor dull brains to think where the nation is that has a gospel of its own. It is not, so far as I know, in the Islands of the Sea; it is not in India, else my authorities are astray; it is not in China, nor is it in Japan. I am quite sure that the Indians of Hindustan have it not. Nor do any of the Mohammedan lands have it. Perhaps some astral shape in the country of the roof of the world has it but is preserving it until the dawn of a new millenium.

Is it not possible that you have made a mistake? There was a Man who had been crucified who stood on the slopes of a mountain in Palestine and said to His followers that they were to go into all the world and to preach His Gospel. If the accounts are correct He supposed that the nations did not have a gospel or a good-news of their own worth the name. You will, I am sure, with me do reverence to the name of Jesus Christ and acknowledge that He is the world's Greatest One; though we may agree no farther theologically. That is no matter for worryment. But I think you have slipped in an editorial which would be greatly strengthened without such a covert reference to Christian missions and the uselessness thereof, engaged as they are in sending the Gospel to people who have a gospel. He that measures his words is wise; he who does not do so scatters untruth and disaster. For the most part I like your paper with some exceptions, kindred to those I have just mentioned. But a CANADIAN COURIER should reflect and guide in right ways Canadian life. And Canadian people believe in Missions.

Very sincerely,

H. T. DEWOLFE.

Readers will note that the Reverend Principal tries to take advantage of us by arguing that there is no gospel but the Protestant Gospel. We have looked up our dictionary and we cannot find any justification for this narrow interpretation. Among Protestant people, the Gospel is a short form of expression for "the Protestant Gospel," but why not the Catholic Gospel or the Mohammedan Gospel? Gospel means glad tidings, and is not the Roman Catholic or the Mohammedan entitled to regard his Bible or Koran as a gospel, or as containing a gospel?

If the writer of the "Reflection" in question had used the word "religion" instead of "gospel," he would have come perhaps nearer to expressing his exact meaning, and the Reverend Principal would have been saved his two type-written pages. But is not this a small point to raise? Now that it is raised, would the Principal deny that the "Book of History" edited by Confucius is not a gospel to his followers? True, he did not claim direct revelations from heaven; he was recording only what the master minds before him had gained from experience or revelation. Nevertheless what he recorded has remained unto this day a gospel to the people who study it and believe in it. Do the sacred books of Buddhism, the three Pitakas and the Great Vehicle literature, not contain any gospel?

Principal Grant once wrote: "Hence He gave to His Message the name of Gospel or the Message of Joy to all the people." But "gospel" is an English word which Christ never heard—must we therefore quibble and say Principal Grant was wrong? It seems narrow to restrict the word "gospel" to Christ's message only, and we feel sure no English lexicographer of note would approve of such a narrow usage of this word.

Perhaps we cannot do better than close this brief contribution to a large subject by suggesting that all those who doubt whether the other religions of the world contain gospels should read "Religions of the World," that admirable little volume written by the lamented Principal Grant, or some other volume of a similar character. Of course, this advice is not tendered to the Reverend Principal of Wolfville, because he is already an expert in the study of comparative religion.