

Our Contributors.

Biblical Criticism.

Editor the Dominion Presbyterian:

It may have been rather daring for "one of our western ministers" to write a letter on Biblical criticism. "Western ministers" have not much time to be specialists although most of them seem to keep fairly well in touch with what is going on in the world. They are, however, facing very practical problems and have learned something as to the most effective weapons to use in the warfare against evil.

You are mistaken in supposing that I indiscriminately condemned critical study in the letter to which you refer. What was condemned is the critical study which makes a business of looking for errors in the Bible and which takes delight in shocking people who take the Book to be the very word of God. We are grateful to men whose books fill our libraries and help us in the study of the word of God, but we get the best assistance from those who start out with the belief that it is the only infallible guide to faith and conduct. You are right in saying that there is no gulf between knowledge and faith but there is a gulf between an unproven hypothesis and real fact. Destructive critics with an ultra-evolution hypothesis which they have brought over from physical science to fit on to the Bible seem more apt to get lost in the gulf than get across it.

Letters received from ministers, laymen and students all over Canada thanking me for my humble letter on the "Supreme Book" indicate a very wide spread feeling of dissatisfaction with the assurance of some who state theories as if they were actually proven. The onus of proving their position rests upon the destructive critics and not upon the whole church of Christ which holds the ground from which she has done such splendid service for humanity. The assurance of some in assuming that a mere assertion is enough to overturn the views of years would be amusing if it were not so serious in its effect upon some minds. But there are hosts of Christian people who refuse to shut their eyes and open their mouths and swallow everything that a destructive critic prescribes.

R. G. MACBETH.

A. & I. M. F.

Editor DOMINION PRESBYTERIAN:

The special merit of the three Overtures presented to last Assembly in connection with The Aged and Infirm Ministers Fund is that they frankly confess the impossibility of developing a reasonable and consistent scheme on the dual basis of Business and Benevolence.

Difficulties had been recorded often and courageous attempts to overcome these difficulties are matters of history; but the Presbyteries of Westminster and of Owen Sound and a private member of the Presbytery of Stratford were the first to declare before the Assembly the absolute impossibility of the undertaking. Business, they have reminded us, is of Law and Justice: Benevolence of Grace and Love and we presume it will not be long now until it is generally acknowledged that one can no more build up a reasonable and consistent scheme on these two foundations than one can build up a

castle the foundation of which rests partly on water.

What a long step forward the Church may be expected to take and next year if the Joint Committee just attaches due importance to that one point!

Now to proceed one step further along the same line is it not also evident that if Business as Business, based on Law and pervaded by the Spirit of blind Justice, must be separated thus from Christian work based on the spirit of Christian benevolence, much more must it be separated from that purely spiritual work which is the special mission of the Christian Church, and indeed fall outside its scope altogether.

It appears to us this separation must take place sooner or later and that for many reasons—Business is Business and Religion is Religion; the one is of this world the other is not of this world and although their methods are happily interchangeable their principles are eternally distinct.

Why should the Christian Church begin to build on a Business Foundation? Is the Presbyterian Church in Canada dissatisfied with the scope of its special mission to go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature? Is this mission insufficient? Does she require forsooth a somewhat broader basis upon which to expand that she must needs establish a business enterprise to be conducted, as one of the Overtures states it—"according to the most approved principles of Life Insurance." Let us pause here for a moment. If our Presbyterian Church begins this kind of work where is she going to stop? If she is going to start up a Private Insurance Society why not also a co-operative store where ministers and their families may be supplied with literature, dry goods provisions, etc. It would not be very difficult to justify such an undertaking on the same principle. And supposing a portion of our church collections—say of those for "Benevolent Purposes" were set apart for the endowment of such a scheme with a legacy and a donation or two thrown into the bargain no doubt the Church would be in a very favorable position to invite the business. And what with a little present from the Hymnal Committee and another little present from the Sabbath School Committee it might be a "fair question," to quote a few words from the last Report, "if for the same outlay, ministers could do better than buy their books, hats, gloves, sugar and tea at The Church's Co-operative Store."

But we must ask the question again—Is this the kind of work the Holy Spirit calls upon the Church to undertake? Is it meet that she should leave the ministry of the Word to serve tables? These, it seems to us, are being admirably served in the meantime by a most efficient staff of men whose devotion to their work is beyond all praise. Surely the Church will find enough to do awhile yet in attendance to that work of a spiritual character which it is its special duty to look after.

But, waving that aspect of the question—are the rank and file of our Church members in sympathy with the adoption of this business proposition? Might it not also be a fair question if such an enterprise could exist at all, contributors to the Benevolent Schemes of our Church

were to insist upon their freewill offerings just going precisely where they were sent. What would be the result, for example, if contributors to the A. & I. M. F. insisted that their offerings go directly to meet the necessities of aged and infirm ministers and not to the flotation or the bonusing of a Clergymen's Insurance Society? This is an important question; for as the Church becomes more democratic it is highly probable that spending Committees will have to reckon somewhat more directly with their contributors than has been customary perhaps in the past.

However, should the General Assembly in its wisdom approve of such a Society, we should like to see it tried. But let it be tried fairly. Let the Business Section of the Scheme be placed on its own merits and not on the merits of some other object; and let it be financed from its own resources and not from the resources of a different scheme altogether. Why should questions concerning the adoption, financing, guaranteeing, &c. of a modern up-to-date Insurance Society be dragged in under the wing of a scheme for collecting the freewill offerings of the people for the benefit of aged and infirm ministers?

We should say if a scheme or any part of a scheme can stand upon its own merits by all means let it stand; but if it cannot stand there, then it cannot stand at all.

WM. A. STEWART.

The Morality That is Laughed At.

The cynicism of these days that makes a motto of "Thou knowest that in the state of innocency Adam fell; and what should poor Jack Falstaff do in the days of villany," has all but made of the honest man and the thorough-going thinker a person who should discreetly be set aside as a crank. In it we find the Eulanic pleading that when you cannot wreck a man's character by calling him a sinner, you can at least undermine his reputation by calling him a saint. And hence when any publicist strives to bring back a community to the first principles of moral action, he is more or less liable to be called all manner of names as a means of driving him and his mission back into oblivion. Even in our political life the same spirit of persecution is to be seen, emphasized as it has lately been by the half-humorous statement of a member of our own parliament at Ottawa that the independent member of that body "has the life of a dog unless he has the nerve of the devil."

In the last issue of this paper there appeared an editorial on the condition of our Sunday Schools. There is evidently in the mind of the writer no other desire than the honest one of starting a much needed mission of religious, social and even political reform within an area the most easily accessible and yet in face of his praiseworthy pleadings the painful and unprogressive routine of the Sunday School class will continue with a majority of our ministers and superintendents arrayed in a determining phalanx against having it interfered with, under the leadership of the Sunday School Union with its lessor schemes and profit bearing literature. Possibly he may even find his personality searched after, brought to light, and made a bonfire of, for his temerity, much as the member of parliament is ignored in all outside social intercourse if he ventures to assert himself against the decrees of partyism.

In a late article reference was made to the great work of reform to which the Rev. Dr. Chown has been called by the church to