

# Canada's National Missionary Congress

## CONCLUDING NOTES OF THE PROCEEDINGS

Last week we gave a portion of Mr. Robert Speers' great address. Here follows the remainder of it.

In the fifth place, we owe it to the missionary that the whole attitude of Western nations to the heathen nations has been transformed. One hundred years ago, if any Western nation wanted to go out and take a slice of the world, it went and took it, and didn't feel called upon to justify itself. But now, if any nation wants to take land elsewhere, it has to set up some missionary reason for its doing so. There was a time when the Eastern people seemed likely to be not the white man's burden, but the white man's beast of burden. What wrought the change? What has given to the West the sense of responsibility for those Eastern people? Nothing so much as the great unselfish movement embodied in the missionary, who has shamed the Western world into a radically new attitude to the downcast people.

In the sixth place, it has been the missionary agency which has in good part launched, and which is necessary to direct, those great movements of life which are afoot in Africa and Asia in our day. These lands are no longer asleep. A book appeared not long ago entitled, "The Unchanging East." There could not be a more complete misnomer than that. You might talk about the unchanging United States, but not the unchanging East. The whole of Asia and Africa is afoot with the thrill of a new life, and it was the missionary movement that largely started that life.

### A Religion Worth Spreading.

In the seventh place, the church at home owes the missionary a supreme debt. He has confirmed and strengthened for her pure and simple evangelical conviction. I am not sure that we might not have lost here at home the pure old faith of the Gospel if it had not been for the foreign missionary enterprise. The very act of spreading Christianity solidifies our confidence in it as worth spreading. If it is not worth spreading it will not be able to convince men that it is worth retaining. A religion that is not so good that it requires its possessor to share it with all mankind will not long be able to convince its possessor that it is worth his while to keep it for himself. The very fact that for one hundred years now we have had a great enterprise communicating Christianity into the world has confirmed us in our convictions that Christianity is worth our while at home. But not in that way only has the missionary retained in us the purity of our evangelical conviction. The unemasculated vigor of the Gospel there has toned and braced us here.

### An Inspiring Ideal.

In the eighth place, we owe it to the foreign missionary that he has brought to us a mighty inspiration. He has brought to the church and the world alike the inspiration of a great idea, the idea of a whole humanity redeemed and gathered into one great kingdom of brotherliness and love. Bishop Thoburn has reminded us that, after all, at the bottom of its heart, the world is grateful to the missionary enterprise for this. In Calcutta, he says, not one man in a thousand who comes there from the East ever asks to be shown the house where Thackeray was born; not one man in a hundred wants to be shown where Macaulay lived, but almost every one asks to be carried out to the burying-ground of Serampore, where lies the body of the English cobbler who relearned

and rethought the world the glories of a world-wide service. The missionary enterprise has kept before the church and the world alike the inspiration of a great ideal.

It has held out before the church and the world the inspiration of a great and dauntless courage, and it has held out before the church and the world, and, oh, my friends, it is holding out before us here tonight the inspiration of a great unselfishness. I said good-bye some time ago in our missionary rooms to an old friend just going back to China. He had gone out a few years ago, taking with him his young wife; she had died there of cholera, and he had come home with his little motherless babe, and was leaving his little one with his mother here; many influences were brought to bear to retain him here; he was going back with the touch of that little child's fingers upon his heart, and by himself, once more to his great task in Southern China. And as I shook hands with him as he went away I was grateful to God for association in an enterprise in which men are so willing to lay down everything in the name and for the sake of Jesus Christ.

### Unity of Race and Race.

Last of all, it is the missionary who is leading the church on to unity, who is showing us how much the things in which we agree outweigh the things in which we disagree. What right have we here to be in different churches; the things in which we agree, how vastly greater they are than the things in which we differ. The missionary enterprise over all the world as it leads the Christian Church out against those great serried ranks of the foes of our Lord shows us how much more He, the Lord, who leads us, how much more His Kingdom, the goal we have in view, more than outweigh all the petty things that still keep us asunder.

And the missionary is making—believe me it is no petty contribution he is making—he is making a great contribution to the unity of the world, by his advancement of the principle of freedom of thought and religious toleration. There is no unity except unity in liberty. The missionary is making a contribution, which the next generation will appreciate far better than ours, to the unity of the world, as he goes out everywhere, acquainting men with this principle and slowly winning its incorporation in their national life. All over the non-Christian world our missionaries believe that God has made of one blood all the races of men; that not a different colored blood runs through the Japanese or Chinese from that which runs through our own veins, and that the same blood which was shed on Calvary for us, men of white faces, was shed also for those men of yellow faces across the sea. The missionary has been contributing to world unity by preaching this message of equality and of love.

The only thing that is going to save the world from a bitter strife, vaster and more terrible than anything the world has known for ages past, is the unity of men in one Lord, one faith, one God and Father of all, who is in all, over and through all.

### Victorious Progress of Missions.

The above was the theme of the afternoon meeting on Thursday, which, in point of interest, was one of the best of the Congress. The speakers were Mr. Robert E. Speer, Bishop Thoburn, late of India, and Rev. S. M. Zwemer, F.R.G.S., late of Arabia. A very pleasing feature of the afternoon was the singing,

in native Indian dialects, of two revival hymns by Rev. W. E. and Mrs. Byers, for many years missionaries in India under the Methodist Episcopal Board. From the artistic point of view the singing was well done, and it had a strangely appealing effect upon the audience.

Mr. Speer's address was on "The Awakening Orient," and was strong and effective, though covering ground in a general way somewhat familiar to the careful reader of the daily or religious press. He pointed out that the cry of Asia for the Asiatics was being replaced by that of China for the Chinese and Japan for the Japanese. How could we be surprised at this when we ourselves were shouting Canada for the Canadians, and trying to keep out our brethren? At the bottom of this political awakening, he believed, was an ethical awakening, which marked the coming of the Asiatic to his manhood. He had formerly cringed to the world; now he was standing up and asserting himself. The Asiatic was beginning to recognize that the same colored blood was running in the veins of all men. There were not a few, all through India, who had given up entirely their old religions, the forms of which had become distasteful to them. The Western civilization had crashed against that of the East, and the latter was doomed. The great question was whether there was to be a renaissance without a reformation, or if we were to direct this renaissance to the service of God.

### The Sure Victory.

Bishop Thoburn's address had for its title "The Sure Victory." The very fact that he, who had given a life-time of service to mission work in India, many times under circumstances of the most discouraging and trying nature, should have chosen such a theme, was itself full of inspiration. His address showed that he had abundant reason for the faith that was in him, faith founded, not upon experience, but on the sure word of God, "I have overcome the world."

When Bishop Thoburn went out to India, many years ago, as a mere boy, he found, after some experience, that there were many things he could take for granted in the convictions and beliefs of the people. He did not need to give much teaching and instruction about God or about Jesus Christ in a formal way, but had simply to tell his story and leave it with God's spirit to bring it home to the native conscience and heart. He thought much time and energy were wasted by the opposite method.

After long experience of fear and doubting he had come also to the strengthening conviction that the Saviour was with him in everything he was trying to do. When, after five years of incessant labor, he went back to his home with his motherless children to be cared for, he had to confess with some trepidation that he had only baptized five people, just one a year. He had, however, gone back to India, and after three or four more years' labor he had only thirteen converts in his charge. But one day he went to a small country place to baptize a woman and her child, when thirteen natives asked to be baptized. Bishop Thoburn was in doubt about doing so, and suggested further training before baptism. "But," added the Bishop, "the native missionary had more sense than I had and advised that the men should be baptized, and I consented. I felt some doubt of the wisdom of the proceeding, and was even glad that I had no ritual with me, but the baptism took place. I could not get to the place again for a whole year, and then one hundred and thirteen native Christians at the spot joined in celebrating the Lord's Supper."

Continuing Bishop Thoburn said that at present the average conversions in India were over forty-six per day. The task in India looked like a big thing, but it could be done. He told how the first lady doctor had come to India, and how Lord Dufferin, then Viceroy, had set