

DON'T BELIEVE IN FOREIGN MISSIONS.

By Rev. John Woods, D.D.

"I don't believe in foreign missions."
Oh, you don't! Then you think Christianity ought to have died where it was born, in the little country of Palestine, about the size of the State of New Jersey, or one-sixth as large as Ohio. The moment the gospel was carried beyond the Holy Land it became a foreign missionary enterprise. Before the death of the last of the apostles it had been carried throughout the Roman Empire, and firmly established in three continents.

Don't believe in foreign missions! Then you think that when Jesus commanded his followers to go into all the world and make disciples among all nations, he laid upon them an unreasonable and hopeless task. You think that, when Jesus said, "I am the light of the world," when he assumed to set up the kingdom of God among men; or when he declared, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away," he was simply a visionary, carried away by his own enthusiasm, and cherishing ideas and aims that could by no possibility be realized.

Don't believe in foreign missions! Then you do not think much of the prayer which our Saviour has taught us: "Thy kingdom come; they will be done in earth as it is in heaven." You are not in sympathy with Christ, for the salvation of the world is a cause which lies near his heart. He loves the poorest Hindoo and the most benighted African, and died that they might live.

Don't believe in foreign missions! Then you must believe in selfishness. We have a good thing, let us keep it for ourselves. We have long enjoyed the blessings of Christianity, its noble ideals, its pure morality, its inspiring precepts, its gracious promises, its immortal hopes; but to impart these to the heathen is not our concern.

Don't believe in foreign missions! Then you have no appreciation of some of the noblest lives that have ever lived on this planet. Think of the great company of saintly men who have given themselves to the cause. It shines with the names of Carey, and Henry Martyn, and Brainerd, and McChesney, and Schwartz, and Elliott, and Bishop Heber, and Adoniram Judson, and Scudder, and Dr. Duff, and Eli Smith, and Robert Morrison, and Hudson Taylor, and Mackay of Uganda, and Lowry, and Moffatt, and Livingstone, and Dr. Patton. What a constellation that is! But to you it is nothing. The mention of these names will not quicken your pulse one beat to the minute, for the heroism of foreign missions is nothing to you! You don't believe in it. What must Jesus think of you? Herald and Presbyter.

The true Christian is always beneficent; he cannot be otherwise, for the spirit of Christianity is the beneficent spirit. Christianity is a religion of benevolence, a religion which prompts to confer favors. Therefore he is not a Christian who is not all the time seeking reasons for conferring favors, and much less is he Christian who "shuts up his bowels of mercies" or strives to avoid conferring favors or bestowing benefits whenever the opportunity is offered. One would suppose that the office of the minister would be not so much to stimulate believers to benevolence as to instruct them in the exercise of it.

Never to tire, never to grow cold; to be patient, sympathetic, tender; to look for the budding flower and the opening heart; to hope, always, and, like God, to love always—this is duty.—Amiel.

"YE SHALL RECEIVE POWER."

By Rev. J. A. R. Dickson, Ph. D.

How much empty, useless effort has been put forth because this word has been forgotten! It is for all Christians, and a word of ringing, gladness cheer it is. It brings heart and hope to the most despondent, and a sweet assurance to the most doubtful, and a brave courage to the most fearful. It is a word in season, a word for all times. The Spirit of God in the soul brings life, light, love, joy, peace, or, in the great comprehensive word used here, power.

And what a precious and far-reaching power it is! By it we enter into the thoughts of God as given in the sacred scriptures, so that we understand them and feel their spiritual grace in our hearts. The Spirit causes the seed of the Word to germinate and give forth its rich life in an abundant fruitfulness.

The Spirit gives us power to speak the truth revealed to the soul, with a heroic and fearless bravery, to whomsoever it may be sent. This is a power that presses on the inner nature with a constraining energy, so that we are led to say with the early disciples: "We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." We dare not be "disobedient unto the heavenly vision."

In this Spirit-given power we exercise the graces of the Christian character, "the fruit of the Spirit," which is, "love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." The abundant opportunities that arise in the friction and fever of daily life are not allowed to slip unimproved. Alas, opportunity to exercise a grace is often lost by our resisting the Holy Spirit and yielding to the enmity of our carnal nature. We are not led by the Spirit, but driven impetuously by our own passions, and, as a result, our graces are not cultivated and caused vigorously to grow.

The same power strengthens us to stand up for Christian principle, affirming and maintaining the sanctity of the Sabbath, the Holiness of God's house, the perpetual necessity of family religion, the need of unceasing prayer as the expression of the new life of God in the soul of man.

From the Holy Spirit we receive power to endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ, to stand up for Him and fight the good fight of faith. At the time one is so engaged, it seems to be of little avail; unlikely to bear fruit, and more likely to perish; but, as Samuel Rutherford was wont to say, "God's seed will come to God's harvest." The battle is the Lord's, and we do not fight in vain. He who fights, develops his own character, and makes it possible for others to do the same under better conditions.

Have we power? This power? If not, listen to Christ: "If ye being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?"

Galt Ont.

Are you seeking to be your best, to those nearest you? If not, you may be quite sure you are missing some of life's purest joy and highest service. How often the teaching of the Christian home is discounted by the want of earnest effort to please and gladden and serve in the family circle. To those nearest to us, God has given a stronger claim upon us than any others in the world.

Christ comes only to the want of the soul. We shall know him, love him, feel his saving power, the glory and the blessedness of his birth in our souls, only when we heartily desire him.—Selected.

FOR STRANGERS AND THE SICK.*

Some Bible Hints.

Christianity is a glorious thing now; but its present glory is only a shadow of what it will be (v. 31).

There is something of the sheep and something of the goat in each of us, and we cannot divide them; only Omniscience can strike the just balance (v. 32).

The Kingdom is not earned by us, but inherited; not prepared by us, but prepared from the beginning (v. 34).

Christ's identification with the needy is not a figure of speech; he is in them (v. 35).

Suggestive Thoughts.

Is hospitality a lost art with us? If so, with it we have lost much of — Christ.

Each of us is some time to be sick, and to know in our experience how blessed is kindness then.

Foreigners are strangers, and this lesson is a home-mission plea for hospitality toward them.

All our social committees should endeavor to turn our sociability where it is needed,—toward the strangers and the sick.

A Few Illustrations.

Our hopes are part of our Christian capital. Is it lying idle?

Sickness is a Christian opportunity. Some are shut away from the world that Christ may come in to them. Their feet are clogged that they may be blessedly caught.

What if the size of our heavenly mansions depended upon the number of rooms in our earthly mansions used for Christ?

No excursions so far as those one may take with "shut-ins"! Stairways rise from sick-rooms into the unseen world.

To Think About.

Do I grudge time spent with those I may never see again?

Do I see Christ in strangers?

Am I preparing happy memories for my own sick-bed?

A Cluster of Quotations.

Like many other virtues, hospitality is practised in its perfection by the poor. If the rich did their share, how would the woes of this life be lightened!—Kirkland.

If a man be gracious to strangers, it shows that he is a citizen of the world, and his heart is no island, cut off from other islands, but a continent that joins them.—Bacon.

In sickness the soul begins to dress herself for immortality.—Jeremy Taylor.

Disease generally begins that equality which death completes.—Johnson.

Some men treat the gospel as they would a rose; they tear it to pieces in their indiscriminate craze for analysis. Others place it where they may enjoy its sweetness.

There is always hope for one whose soul can be moved by the tender voice of sympathy.

Daily Bible Readings.

M., Feb. 3. Loving the stranger. Deut. 10: 18, 19.

T., Feb. 4. Hospitality. 1 Tim. 5: 1-10.

W., Feb. 5. Brotherly love. Heb. 13: 1-3.

T., Feb. 6. Jesus and the sick. Luke 4: 38-41.

F., Feb. 7. The calling committee. Jas. 5: 12-15.

S., Feb. 8. Christ's command. Matt. 10: 5, 15.

*Sun., Feb. 9. Ministering to strangers and the sick. Matt. 25: 31-46.