

W. J. W. O. Libby  
W. J. W. O. Libby  
Robertson

# The Canadian Evangelist.

"GO . . . SPEAK . . . TO THE PEOPLE ALL THE WORDS OF THIS LIFE."

Vol. V., No. 7.

TORONTO, AUGUST 1st, 1890.

\$1 PER YEAR IN ADVANCE.

## THE Canadian Evangelist

is devoted to the furtherance of the Gospel of Christ; and pleads for the union of all believers in the Lord Jesus in harmony with his own prayer recorded in the seventeenth chapter of John, and on the basis set forth by the Apostle Paul in the following terms: "I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beseech you to walk worthily of the calling wherewith ye were called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long suffering, forbearing one another in love; giving diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, even as also ye were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all, and through all, and in all."—Eph. iv. 1-6.

### In and About Toronto.

The Protestant world is occupied with many questions which relate to the progress of morality and Christianity; but one of these I think surpasses all the others in importance; the question to which I refer is Christian Union. The various religious denominations have expressed themselves on this subject; no denomination seems to have a monopoly of it at present; neither is it confined to the religious press, but the secular papers also deal largely in it. While many of the opinions advanced are really amusing, as coming from those who profess to know the Scriptures, still I think we should feel encouraged and rejoiced at the present condition of the question, at the freedom with which it is discussed, and the desire that it may be accomplished.

It must be a matter of great interest to us, who have come so largely from the Presbyterian ranks to see the attitude of that influential body toward union. I have enjoyed the pleasure of listening to several able speeches on the subject by the leading men of the denomination, and one thing I have been convinced of is, that many of them desire union; but they are still at sea as to the manner in which to accomplish it. So far as I have heard they all deem it necessary to have a man made creed. One able advocate of it said: "I think it is possible to prepare a confession of faith broad enough for all to unite upon." It seems strange to us that intelligent men cannot see that every human creed will be imperfect; this has been demonstrated so many times in the past that it is quite useless and foolish to attempt to prepare another. Seven Presbyterian ministers in the book "How Shall We Revise" the Westminster Confession of Faith? have declared that the old document is, "unscriptural, partizan, inefficient, unsatisfactory." The first of these is a sufficient reason why it should go. These learned doctors fail to see that all human creeds will likely have the same faults. Then again it is rather strange, that while the Confession is acknowledged to be unscriptural, those who are ordained to the ministry take an obligation upon themselves to teach it. At present we have more than one

thousand ordained Presbyterian ministers in Canada, and all these are supposed to subscribe to that document, which, by their own showing, is unscriptural. To my knowledge, however, several young men rather than take those vows and teach those things which are unscriptural have abandoned the ministry.

Of all the Presbyterians who have written on the question, Professor O. A. Briggs, of Union Theological Seminary, seems to be the clearest. In the *S. S. Times* of June 21st, he has a long article on "Church Unity." In it he says: "The movement in the direction of church unity underlies, pervades, and will eventually absorb, all others; for Christ is the sovereign of the world, and He reigns to sanctify and glorify His church in the midst of the world. The Christian world is passing through a transformation in all departments under the direction of the Divine Spirit, who is ever coming forth from the Father and the Son to guide the church into all truth, holiness and excellence." "Thus liberty and variety have been won in the battle of the centuries by breaking the organizations of the church, and each of the fragments of the church has had its own share in its accomplishment. There is no farther need of separate ecclesiastical organization to conserve or to promote liberty or variety. The problem now waiting solution is to construct an authority out of this liberty, and unity in this variety. This can never be accomplished by taking the larger pieces and throwing the smaller ones away, or by cementing them together by schemes of human devising, or by endeavors to conserve the frames constructed in the times of separation. These broken pieces of the mirror of our Lord must go into the furnace, frames and all; they must be fused in the flames of Divine love, and compacted by the energy of the Divine Spirit. . . . The unity thus far considered is the unity of a mass, an unorganized unity. This is, indeed, the actual condition of the church today. The problem of church unity is to organize this mass; for Christians are something more than a mass, they are living persons united in living and loving communion to Jesus Christ, our Head, and they are to be united in the same living and loving union to all Christians. What an enormous power there is in the life and love diffused throughout the Christian church! What vast energy there is in the unorganized, or partly organized, forces of Christianity! The waste now going on in the Christian world is appalling. Christianity is crying as never before after a master mind that will organize these resources and combine those churches in one all-comprehending organization."

Nothing is more silly than the pleasure some people take in speaking their minds. A man of this make will say a rude thing for the mere pleasure of saying it, when an opposite behavior, full as innocent, might have preserved his friend, or made his fortune. —Steele.

## The Press.

### On Questions of the Day.

#### PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

Probably the most difficult, and unquestionably the most important problem now before the people of Canada for solution is that of the Public schools in relation to the Churches and religious instruction. Recent discussions in the Church courts have set in a pretty clear light the objections that lie against any solution yet proposed. It will be admitted by most of those who have given thought to the subject, and whose opinions carry weight, that the existing educational methods are unsatisfactory in more than one respect. They are politically unsatisfactory, because they accord special privileges to one section of the population, and permit funds collected by the agency of the State to be used for the propagation of religious tenets which are not only peculiar to one Church, but deemed erroneous and and hurtful by the members of all the other Churches, that is, by a large majority of the whole people. The Public schools are unsatisfactory on moral grounds, because they fail to impart that thorough moral training which is the most potent influence in the formation of good character. It is consequently essential to the best interests of society and the State, and which, in the opinion of many of those who have given thought to the subject, can be made effective only when based on definite and positive religious teachings. As a matter of fact and experience, nearly all competent educators and nearly all thoughtful and observant men and women of every class must admit that, viewed from the standpoint of their success in moulding virtuous character and giving to the State high-minded as well as intelligent citizens, the Public school systems of Canada and the United States have been more or less disappointing. The expectations so fondly cherished a generation or two ago, of great things to be accomplished through the agency of free schools and universal education in the way of diminishing vice and crime, have certainly not been realized. Many are, we dare say, ready to go much farther and agree with Mr. LeSueur that the vaunted free schools have, to a large extent, failed even in that work of mere mind-training or intellectual development which is too often made their almost exclusive aim, to the neglect of those higher faculties of the soul which must always be the criterion of the truest manhood and womanhood. But, leaving aside for the present this branch of the subject and confining our attention wholly to political and ethical considerations, the still unsolved problem is to devise a Public school system which shall include the essentials of sound religious instruction, and yet neither do violence to the rights or convictions of any citizens, nor permit unwarrantable intrusion by either State or Church within the exclusive domain of the other.

Speaking generally, the modes of dealing with this difficult question,

which have been proposed and advocated may be reduced to three. First, it is proposed that the State should undertake, in connection with the Churches and subject to their approval, the work of unsectarian religious instruction. It is recommended that the Churches should agree upon a series of Scripture readings, and, we presume, expository or catechetical exercises in connection therewith, and that the course of religious instruction thus agreed on by the Churches should be made compulsory by the Government upon the teachers. This may be said to resemble, to some extent, the system now in vogue in Ontario, but it would go much farther. Though the course of Scripture readings now prescribed by the Education Department had the sanction of individual clergymen of the various denominations, they were not prepared by representatives of the Churches, nor were the leading clergymen who are said to have approved them authorized, so far as we are aware, to represent in the matter the various religious bodies of which they were members. Moreover, no religious instruction is prescribed or permitted in connection with the Scripture readings. The plan for concerted denominational action above outlined seems to have the approval of at least large and influential sections of most of the Protestant denominations. It is open, however, to very serious and, in the opinion of many, fatal objections. It takes no account of the views and convictions of agnostic, Jewish and infidel parents, and of many Christians as well, who might not approve of the selections or the accompanying instruction. It trenches upon the principles which are generally in America considered sound touching the relations of Church and State. It empowers the State to impose upon its officers, the teachers of the Public schools, religious duties which lie beyond its proper sphere. It virtually authorizes and requires the Government to undertake religious teaching as a part of its duties, thus implying that the Government shall undertake to enquire into the religious opinions of candidates for the teacher's office. It also tacitly involves the exclusion of sceptics of all classes from the teaching profession, inasmuch as there would be an impropriety and lack of good faith in religious instruction imparted by irreligious, or agnostic, not to say atheistic teachers. All Christians will, no doubt, agree that religious teaching, which is merely perfunctory, much more that which is irreverent or hypocritical, is worse than none. Moreover, *quis custodiet ipsos custodes?* When the Government undertakes the work of religious instruction and of testing the religious qualifications of teachers, who shall instruct or test the Government and the chiefs of the Education Department, in order to be sure of their fitness to superintend such a work? Difficulties multiply on every hand. It is tolerably clear that the solution of the problem can never be found in religious training by the State.

A second method is that proposed by Dr. Langtry and approved no doubt by a considerable section of the

Christian population—denominational schools supported by state-imposed taxes, but managed and controlled by the different religious denominations; in short, Separate Schools not only for Roman Catholics but for each of the various bodies of Protestants, or such combinations of them as might be agreed upon. This plan would certainly have its advantages. It would leave each Christian sect free to exert its fullest influence in the work of moral and religious instruction. But it would be beset with difficulties at the outset and a host of minor evils would follow in its train. In the first place the limits of the aggregated Christian Churches are by no means identical with those of the whole population. A large number of citizens of various nationalities and of non-Christian creeds, or of no creed at all, would thus be left unprovided for. The children of such parentage must either be forced within the precincts of one or another of the sectarian schools, or the State must provide secular schools for them, leaving the problem of religious education still unsolved so far as those who most need it are concerned; or worse still, these children must be wholly neglected. The Government must either undertake the invidious task of supervising and inspecting religious schools, or prove recreant to the political principle that Government supervision is the correlative of Government aid. There would be an end of all uniformity, and schools would overlap each other as churches now do far beyond the needs of the different localities or their ability to support competent teachers. Petty and perpetual rivalries and jealousies would spring up amongst the competing sects. Both education and religion would be very likely to suffer and the last state of public education would be worse than the first. Moreover, what could be more wasteful and absurd than for the Government to use its money and machinery to educate the children of the country in religious systems in many respects diametrically opposed to each other, knowing that a large part of the powers thus developed in after life to mutually combatting the doctrines inculcated at school? Clearly the solution of the educational problem is not to be found in a denominational or sectarian system of Public schools.

There remains only, so far as we can see, the method of absolute secularization of the Public schools, so far as the laws and regulations of the State are concerned. This does not imply, as we may presently show, that the schools must necessarily be destitute of religious teaching and influence of the best kind. Because the Government may not prescribe it does not follow that it must forbid. It is certainly its duty—there can be no quarrel or question on this point—to prescribe and enforce a course of thorough moral training in the schools, and it is worthy of serious consideration whether it is not now a radical defect in our Ontario system that no text-book, dealing with questions of character and conduct and the right and wrong of things

(Continued on page 8.)