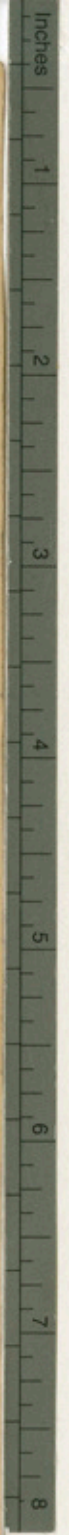


Articles

No 31

Subject  
Foreign Missions



*Spain*

1891

George Thompson  
Lecturer

There appears to be a wide-spread opposition to Foreign Missions, not so much among our organized Christian people, as among the nominal Christians who constitute the assembly or congregation, and those in Christian communities who are not "professing Christians." These, more or less, help support the churches directly and indirectly. Pastors earnestly desire their full sympathy.

If you mention the Foreign Missions to any such an opponent, he says first: "I am not in favor of Foreign Missions at all. You should take care of the home-field first. You have not succeeded with your home-missions. Till you do so it is not common sense to send missionaries abroad."

A second declaration is: "There is so much suffering at hand, so much poverty, extending even to little children, that it is wrong to put benevolent money to other uses till the wants of these destitute ones are first met and relieved."

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A second declaration is: "There is so much suffering and want, so much poverty, extending even to little children, that it is wrong to put benevolent money to other uses till the wants of these destitute ones are first met and relieved."

A third declaration is: "that there is no unity in what makes up christianity- and in fact Bhuddism, Confucianism and Mehamedism are just as good for men as your anomalous Christianity."

The fourth declaration is against the Missionaries themselves. "They are self-seeking, selfish men. They have really never accomplished anything. No Chinese, for example, are ever actually converted. To seek to change the settled convictions of such men is futile. They will pretend to a change in order to curry favor; make money, learn the English language or secure some other selfish end, but among them or the Indians there are really no bona fide conversions whatever."

If these declarations be true, Christian people are in great error, and ought to change their religious theories and their methods of dealing with their fellow men. Therefore let us examine with candor and care these declarations.

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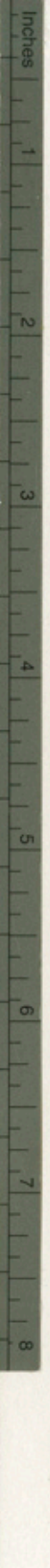
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you to help your own family, your own community, your own State, or your own countrymen prior to others; but the largest humanity exemplified by Christ did not make the limits so narrow. The neighbor most approved was a stranger of another nation. Behold our practice and see if it is not right even according to the more enlightened self-love. Every christian man, who endeavors to obey his Master, proportions his missionary gifts. He remembers, first, the home-church then in order the home-sunday-school, the home-mission in his neighborhood and the home-mission for the country. These are his first care. He not only gives of his money, but what is as precious, he gives thought, time, prayer. Some christians work as teachers, some as singers and some as scholars. New York City is full of these self-denying workers. Other cities abound in them, and country districts rejoice in their unfailling presence. The large proportion of what the christian can spare from his business he does devote to these blessed and effective home-missionary efforts.

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Again these voluntary efforts are put forth by every church. Each one has organized and extended <sup>its home-missions</sup> from Canada to Mexico, from Maine to Alaska.

But you reply, "you have not done enough yet." If those who stand back and complain, cry: "too little, too little" of such home-work! Why not come in and take hold; give to it your hearts. Let these men of luxury who spend thousands upon thousands upon themselves, and seek in a myriad ways to promote their own pleasure - let them stop and reflect and come in with a changed purpose, namely to do what they can to plant and keep alive christian schools, christian associations and churches, to send forth and support, more and more, true and noble young men in their already promising labors. Such suggestions show how to lessen the complaints touching the home-field. We do earnestly covet great sacrifices and extraordinary gifts from all those who prefer the home-field. Time, prayer, personal labor, teaching, money. Home-missions need all these. Such mission-work always helps and enlarges the men and

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Wm. Home-Missions

women engaged in them.

But the declaration that we have not succeeded in the home-mission field is not a fair statement. It is the same as to say that a church has not been successful because all who have heard the word through that church have not been converted and saved. Some will hear and believe and some will go their way unchanged. Yet the true leaven is there and is working.

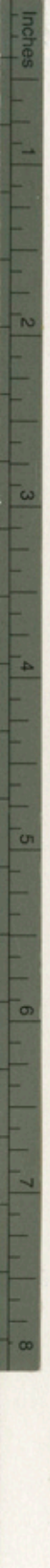
If there are in any church those who have not bowed the knee to Baal, i. e., if there is genuine spiritual life in it, there is the earnest of success; for there must have been seed-sowing and there has been or will be a harvest. As in a single church, so in the many, so in the entire field. In the home-mission field there has been abundant and faithful seed-sowing and in the future there will certainly be an abundant harvest. Had the exaction, now put upon us, of extraordinary results, as a test of the genuineness, been put upon the Apostles, the <sup>limited</sup> advancement of the first century would have condemned

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*W. J. ...*



them. They did not convert and evangelize everybody at Jerusalem before going to Antioch and Cesaerea. They did not have a very large adherence in Asia before they had penetrated into Africa and Europe. And if you study the work of evangelizing Jerusalem alone, you cannot help feeling the need of the return currents <sup>that came</sup> from Italy and Greece.

So now, a close observer can but notice that the return currents of joy, peace and hope coming in by letters, by reports, by veterans visits, from all parts of the world (including the islands of the sea) that have been redeemed, stir up, nourish and bless the home-field. Good news from a far country was, is and ever will be pleasant to the ear and sweet to the human heart.

"It is not common sense to send missionaries abroad." This should be put along side the next declaration, viz: "There is so much suffering and poverty extending even to the little children at home that it is wrong to put benevolent money to other uses, till the wants of these suffering ones are first met and relieved."

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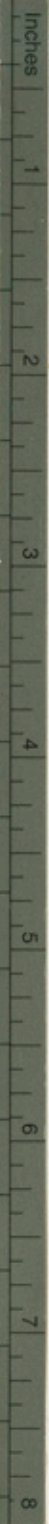
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My answer is that the objection goes too far. The duty of relieving physical suffering is not and never has been put upon the churches. It is upon the City, the Village, the Town, the State, upon each of us as a citizen, upon all of us as citizens of the country where the want prevails. The State provides for the insane, the deaf-mutes, the disabled and the orphaned.

Of course benevolent hearts will do all possible to relieve physical suffering that meets them; but they never so construe their duty as to refrain from giving presents to their own children, or to keep their children from private schooling, from academic and college education, because there is suffering among the poor. A remedy sought in this way from men and women would not be practicable. You may allege that you believe that all money ought to go that way till the very poor are made comfortable. This is better. All insurance on buildings and lives, all money for public buildings and parks, all for the improvement of water-works, thoroughfares, as streets and bridges etc. etc. Well, if we admit this obligation,



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and condense the expression of a man's duty to be, to relieve his fellows from physical suffering and poverty, Even then there is a paramount need. The soul is of more importance than the body. The body is a very poor machine, even if embalmed <sup>the body</sup> without the intelligent living entity. The soul's disease makes a man more miserable than any mere physical pain. So you must admit that of two benevolent acts the one that gives the larger relief is to be preferred. Oh, yes! you say, for those at home! Does a physician so limit himself? If he goes into a New York Hospital, would he dilligently care for the man born in New York and neglect the man from Cuba? A Japanese has come hither and become a skilful physician, may he not carry his remedies to Japan? Had you traveled in China and found men, women and children there dying of a dreadful pleague of which you knew the remedy, would you withold all knowledge of it and let them die because they were not born and did not live in America? No. No, of course not! You, the objector, if you had to beg the means, would hasten to carry the great relief.

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How much more then is the duty upon us christians to send the heart-remedy, the glad tidings of great joy, to China, Japan and to all places where men still sit in darkness!

The objectors third declaration is against our differences and divisions. Families have differences, politicians do not see alike. If a company or body come to absolute agreement on all points, it is a sign of excessive tyranny or of approaching dissolution. But christian differences and divisions are much less than their enemies suppose. Two genuine followers of Christ understand ~~themselves~~ <sup>each other</sup> very quickly. A strong tie binds them in spite of shades of <sup>doctrinal</sup> color.

Recently at Clifton Springs, N. Y., some hundred and fifty returned missionaries, representing the various churches, met and counceled together, and united in fervent prayer. There was no discoverable difference of faith. They had one Lord, one <sup>faith</sup> ~~Father~~, one Baptism. They showed one practical remedy for the unhappy souls of men, for souls at home, and for souls abroad, CHRIST THE SAV-  
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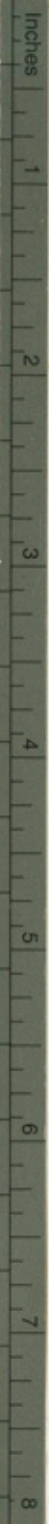
Now as to Christianity being no better than Bhuddism, Confucianism or Mohamedism. It is easy to say just that. Some men among us say that an absolute monarchy is better than a Republic! I will leave it to them to demonstrate a proposition, which appears to me to contradict the plain facts of our common history. Now here is a better proposition. Our Lord Jesus Christ is a perfect type of manhood. The genuine follower of Christ approximates that type; and it is an unspeakable privilege to be an accepted follower of Christ. To pattern after Bhudda, Confucius or Mahomet has doubtless lifted up some men and nations to some desireable degree; but God's Holy Spirit completely refashions the disciples of Jesus Christ. He brings them out of darkness into light. He sets them in high places. He will eventually present them <sup>to the universe,</sup> to the world in his own likeness.

The fourth declaration that the missionaries are selfish and inefficient is simply a slander. I have had the opportunity to test a number of mission stations in Africa, Europe and Asia, and some where this declaration

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had been made to me before my visit. I did not meet one instance where there was the least show of self-seeking and none where there was not evident fruit of labor. Among the Armenians, who <sup>had years ago</sup> ~~have~~ fallen into a lax christianity, the results of missionary efforts were plainly two-fold. First, children and young people were taught the better way with success; and second, a spirit of emulation stirred the old priests and leading Armenian people into activity; so that they were <sup>and with evident success,</sup> ~~striving~~ to get better and larger schools and active churches of their own.

Finally, to declare that foreigners have not been converted and brought to Christ is to deny the plain facts of history. Of my own personal knowledge, I can declare that I have witnessed the <sup>confessions</sup> ~~evidence~~ of many men, who have come humbly and sincerely to the truth. There was no motive to deceive me. Among whole tribes, drunkenness, licentiousness, fightings and riotings have entirely disappeared, and in places where these crimes prevailed all that belongs to a happy, enlightened christianity has

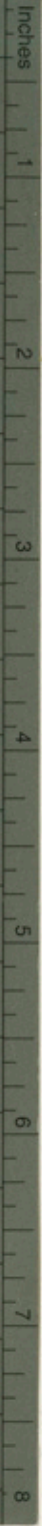


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succeeded. Our objecter has doubtless found a few hypocrites. <sup>But</sup> The counterfeit always bespeaks the neighborhood of the genuine coin. I have been brought into contact with scores of Chinamen and Japanese and Indians who have given as positive, as convincing proofs of discipleship, as any christian to the maner born. The heart of a man is wicked. We know that; but we also know that a man may be born again. You do not doubt the growing attachment of a dog, and believe in his fidelity to his master. Why then would you judge adversely a man who has attained a warm love to Christ and holds to this Master according to his knowledge! There is a manifestation of tender <sup>human</sup> attachment that cannot be mistaken.

To us who belong to Christ, his commandment is imperative. He sends us to sow beside all waters. He promises not only a harvest if we faint not, but somehow by his Spirit to be with us always even to the end of the world. And again to us there is a positive inspiration in the largeness of the field; for the field is the whole world.



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O, Lord, our Saviour, we long to have Thee hasten  
to convince men of thy presence, and power to help.

Keep near us and them, day by day, till all shall know Thee,  
and <sup>know</sup> Him who sent Thee <sup>also</sup> all, all from the least to the  
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