

53 Mercers Road, London N, England, October 26th, 1899.

Dear Brother White:-

I have received your letter of August 22nd with the enclosures, and have read the same with considerable care, going over your letter again and again to be quite sure that I understood you correctly. I have hardly known how to reply to you, and so I have let the matter rest until now, and still I do not feel sure that I know what to say. I suppose I could cover up my feelings in the matter, write you an ordinary business letter, and let things take their course, but as this seems to be the beginning of a new order of things, it may be proper to be a little more frank about the real situation. I hope I may be able to do it in the right spirit.

It took me some time to get over the first reading of your letter. The cold, hard, business-like tone in which it seemed to me that it was written, the bald way in which you stated your purpose, which was of course quite evident throughout the letter, the repeated statement to the effect that "we control and are now willing to receive offers from you", made me feel as though I must wait a while before I read it ~~again~~ again. If you and I had been having a long correspondence over these things, and I had been trying to play a sharp game with you and to defraud you of your rights, then I could easily have understood the situation, but to have it begin this way seemed a little unnecessary. Furthermore as it came just when I was having a hard time personally ~~and~~ over our publishing work here, and wondering which way to turn, I suppose it had all the more effect.

It is so evident from your letter that you do not understand the condition of things, so far as this office is concerned, that it may be best to state briefly the situation. This office has a good legal name and is known as "our London publishing house", which sounds well and looks well in print, but I am sorry to tell you that my investigation of its affairs has convinced me that it is largely a name. It has had no independent management here, it has been directed from America as a sort of a branch office, and it has had neither capital nor ability to develop any real publishing business. It has been a distributing depot for other countries, receiving some of its books for these fields from America and getting some printed here, and meantime canvassers sent here by the General Conference and some from this country have sold some of these books here. The management of the General Conference, by which books were sent to Australia without any returns from that field, and the inability of the General Conference to pay for these books, almost wrecked the office about eighteen months ago. And now the Foreign Mission Board is drawing it into the same position through its inability to pay for books, &c, sent to the different fields for which it is responsible. The Christiana office has now gone to the wall, and this office could easily follow its lead, if the publishing offices in America should press it for their just dues.

As near as I can judge, the canvassing work in this field has been steadily running down for five or six years in the past, until now almost every one of the American canvassers, who were sent here by the General Conference, have returned to America. There are left here only three or four canvassers who are capable of selling a book successfully, if the price is above four or five shillings. The others work on small books like Prophetic Lights, Glorious Appearing, Steps to Christ, &c, and the Present Truth.

The local work is by no means sufficient to support this office on its present basis of management. While the field here is unlimited here, yet this is only a weak conference, numbering about 800, and a mission field until a little over a year ago. By the very plan of management from America the office has always been kept short of capital and has never been encouraged to do any independent work of publishing. At the same time an expensive plan of management has been fostered, with a city office whose net loss last year was over £120. In order to make it possible for the paper canvassers to support themselves as far as possible, the price of the Present Truth to them is a farthing a copy, which is half or two thirds the cost of production. The loss to the office from this source last year was over £360. The balance sheet this year showed a profit of £160, but this was on paper merely. The fact is that the only reason why this office is able to go on from day to day and pay its current expenses is because it does not pay its accounts for books in America, and it is unable to do this because the Foreign Mission Board is utterly unable to pay this office what it owes. How long this shall continue we purpose to leave with the General Conference Association and the Foreign Mission Board to determine.

Of course you will ask at once, Why do you not develop your business when you have such a field in which to work? The answer is easy. This office has neither the capital nor the ability in its management, ^{nor canvassers in the field} to do this. It has never developed anything since it was opened. It has simply been an expensive printing office and forwarding station to do such business as has been put into its hands. Now the same kind of authority which has put the business into its hands is proposing to take it away and the office will simply fall to pieces, unless there is an entire change of plan. This change of plan involves a collapse of the present expensive bubble and a coming down to a conduct of the business in harmony with the actual facts, and this I have not felt clear to urge yet, inasmuch as it would ~~mean~~ mean loss of position and income to those who were placed here even against their own wishes by the American management.

With all this situation to face comes your letter proposing a new division of territory, giving to the Echo Co. the Indian and the South African field. I say proposing a change, and yet I can hardly regard it as simply a

proposal of a change, for your own letter states that you have been trying to sell books to the South African Conference and your published report expresses satisfaction that you have begun to ship books to South Africa. At the same time in your letter you deplore the lack of respect which is shown to the rights of territory by the different publishing houses. Now I can state my position about this matter of rights of territory very simply. I have long since become weary of these business strifes among brethren to see who shall own and control the Lord's vineyard and shall secure the right to do the Lord's work in any particular part of the world. I am thoroughly tired of all this controversy as to how much the brethren shall pay each other for his part in this work in writing a book, or doing some other work, as though this were one of the chief ends in the Lord's work. I am quite willing to leave all this brotherly wrangling to those who are interested in it, but I prefer to spend my energies in trying to do some good to those who are in darkness and bondage. For these reasons I do not care to express any opinion ^{upon} your correspondence upon the royalty question. I do not pretend to understand this matter and my simple opinion would be of no value to anyone. But about the territory: it is evidently not a question open to argument. You have already begun to ship books to South Africa and will probably continue to do so, if you can get the brethren there to order them of you. I do not make the least objection to this and shall do nothing to hinder it. The same will be true of any other field where you wish to send books. The same sort of authority which gave business to this office can take it away, and the hand which built up can tear down. Only let it be clearly understood. I have no desire to keep up this office, if the work can be better done in some other part of the world. If Australia is a better center for this message among the English speaking people of Great Britain and the Colonies than London is, I have not the least objection against the publishing work being done in Australia and the books being sent from there to any part of the world, even to London itself. Of course I am entitled to have my own private opinion in this matter, but I certainly shall not urge it against the decision of those in authority. Personally it would be a relief to me if there were no appearance of a publishing house here, then we should be at liberty to build up something here to meet our own demands as we could develop the work, but now we have an expensive bubble to support.

Now with reference to some of the direct questions and propositions in regard to different books for this field:- From what I have already written you will see that we are totally unprepared to do anything which involves any considerable expense. For this reason we cannot buy a set of plates or print an edition of Desire of Ages. We ^{might} doubtless be able to sell a few of the expensive edition, but I see that you would not want us to do that, as "the territory" must be guarded. I think we can sell the tradition to

our own people, and I shall be glad to have them own and read the book. These books we can purchase of the Pacific Press, as the demand would not be sufficient to warrant us in trying to print an edition. The only way in which an edition of the subscription book could have been printed here would have been to supply Australia and South Africa, but you are printing for yourselves and doubtless intend to supply South Africa, and so there is no field for us to supply and therefore no call to ~~print~~ print. If we had a large and well trained force of canvassers, we have territory enough right at home, but the foreign canvassers have left the field and in one small conference the resources are not equal to the demands. Bro. Salisbury has sent me no proposition bearing upon this matter, as you suggested that you would ask him to do, and so I can make no reply bearing upon that part of it. But that is no matter, as it would not change the situation. You will therefore be able to carry out the wish expressed in your letter, that Africa and India be supplied from Melbourne.

As to The Coming King: We could not handle the book as printed in America, both because it is written for America and because it has English Copyrighted cuts in it. Whether an American, who has never been in England, could adapt this book to England is a question which could only be settled by examining the book and I have not seen a copy of your edition and so could not express an opinion on this point. However, under our present circumstances we have no call for printing an edition. Australia is supplied and South Africa is supplied and there is no demand elsewhere.

As to Gospel Primer: a portion of this book has been printed and sold for two pence. The whole book could not be sold on account of the copyrighted cuts. As you direct us to discontinue printing this book, we shall do so, as you claim to control the rights ~~whenever~~ in this territory and we do not care to argue the matter with you.

As to Thoughts From The Mount of Blessing: we had a call for an edition of this book for our own canvassers who could not sell a large book and who had worked their territory for our other small books already printed here. I therefore persuaded the Pacific Press and the Review and Herald to supply us with a set of plates at the mere cost of the casting and freight. You have now forbidden this arrangement and say that it will be "necessary for you to arrange with us for these plates if you still desire to publish an edition there". It is in this connection that you state with all frankness what is so evident all the time, that it is your purpose to bring the London house to terms quickly. And you may have the satisfaction of knowing that you have succeeded fully. You have the whole thing in your hands and you have brought us to terms at once. The way is now open for you to fix your terms, and then if we can raise the money to come to them we shall do so, and if not we shall be obliged to give up the idea of printing the book here.

However, as you are taking away the territory to which we have been sending and we have only ~~abandoned~~ a few canvassers in this field, I hope you will not deem it necessary to levy a very heavy tax upon us, outside of the royalty which we have of course expected to pay all the time. As we expected these plates from America several months ago, having the promise from time to time that they would be shipped very soon, and so we have encouraged our canvassers to wait a little longer for them, we shall now be obliged to state the facts to them and simply tell them that the whole matter of our printing an edition is thus of necessity indefinitely postponed. We should be glad to have you write us what arrangement you will make, although it is evident that we may not print an edition for a good long time at best, as correspondence and shipment of plates from Australia will take the better part of a year at the least. And thus almost the only book that we can print to sell here and which could be assured of a prompt sale, is kept from the field for another year in order that we may be brought to terms and the supposed rights of territory may be properly recognized.

As to Christ Our Saviour: I am glad that the book has been thoroughly revised. It was a thousand pities that it was ever printed in its original form, as it contradicted both the Bible and The Spirit of Prophecy. Now we do not claim any rights or territory on this book and consequently have no charges to make for them. We have a set of plates in fairly good condition which we shall lose by the change, but this is a small matter as compared with being able to circulate the book with a clear conscience, knowing that it is in harmony with the truth. We shall be glad to have a set of the new plates, if the terms are such that we can meet them, and in the mean time I hope we shall not be obliged to print any more of the old edition. Could you not send us a copy of your new edition when you submit the terms, and also a copy of your edition of Thoughts From The Mount of Blessing?

You suggest in your letter that "the London Printing House will have the lion's share if we should divide the territory in such a way that Great Britain, the Continent of Europe, and South America should receive their books from London, giving Africa, India, China, Japan and Malaysia to the Echo Company." This certainly sounds well, but suppose you look at the facts. The Continent of Europe is already supplied from Hamburg and Basel. We have nothing to do with that territory. South America demands a large proportion of German and Spanish books which are already being supplied from other offices. The profit on our trade with South America for the past year was a mere trifle, even if we had been able to collect, but as it is we simply have the account on our books backed up by the Foreign Mission Board which meets our requests for pay with the answer that they have no money and so cannot pay. This is convincing but it does not help us to pay others.

India would be a profitable field if they could pay, but the Foreign Mission Board assumes their account and then does not pay it, and so it is only a burden. Thus you see that South Africa and Australia are the only fields which are of any real advantage to this office, and those we now lose. The proposed division may look like a generous thing when it is made in Australia without a knowledge of the facts only as gathered from the "statistics", but you can readily see how it looks at this end of the line.

I note your plain intimation that unless "the London Publishing House should take an aggressive and progressive policy", the Echo Co. will be encouraged to become the publishing house for Great Britain and the Colonies and that as a consequence there must be "a readjustment of territorial arrangements". Now we want to have peace over this matter of territory, even though we are obliged to lie down like the lamb inside of the lion in order to secure it. I have told you our situation plainly and have pointed out the impossibility of our being able to enter largely upon aggressive publishing work. I know that you have had a hard time in the work in Australia but the tide has turned in your favour and I did what little I could to turn it. You now have a hold upon the denomination with the leading men to plead for you among the people of America. Now is your time to launch out and get the money with which to do what you want to do. We certainly shall not put anything in your way. Far be it from us from trying to hinder others from doing what the force of circumstances and the past plan of management prevent us from undertaking. But why should all this be put on the hard lines of business, and rights of territory? Must we compensate each other for the privilege of spreading the ~~message~~ message in the different parts of the world? I have supposed that the purpose was to reach the people with the truth and not to build up one publishing house against another, or to pay each other for supposed rights and privileges in this work.

You inquire about our facilities for doing translating and publishing in other languages. This work does not naturally come to this office, and it is unnecessary that we should attempt it, as they are already doing it successfully at Hamburg. I think they are now publishing to a greater or less extent in about seventeen languages there. It is the proper center for such ~~an~~ work as this, and they are doing it.

Now I will not add much to my already long letter. It may do no harm to say that I am not tired of the truth, but I often get very tired of the way in which the work is conducted. It is not encouraging to contemplate the condition into which the work has been brought by the plans of management which have been followed, and yet the same old methods seem to be at the front just as much as ever. Business and religion seem to get pretty thoroughly separated ~~X~~ in the conduct of much of our business, and there is

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apparently little hope of their getting together. The same officialism which has stood between the people and the work is still asserting itself, and the people are losing their confidence and the work is suffering. And still it goes on, and some new scheme is being tried constantly with the people simply as a means of raising money. An empty treasury seems to be the chief stimulus to arouse an official Board to interest the people in the work of spreading the truth. I do not wish to harshly criticise any of the brethren, for they have my sincere sympathy in their troubles. But will the lesson never be learned? And will the work always be hampered and hindered with this sort of official management? I suppose the next General Conference will solemnly elect the same men, with possible slight changes of position to continue the same sort of policy for another two years, and so the blight will continue. It often makes me groan in spirit.

I have read with much interest ~~the~~ your conference Record and thank the senders. There are some things about your work which I cannot understand, but this is not surprising since I am on the other side of the world. ~~MM~~ You may be sure that we shall rejoice in all the prosperity which may attend the work and we shall be glad to see your light break forth speedily. I have written four or five times to your mother, asking for her counsel in matters connected with the work here, but I have received no reply whatever and do not know as I ought to trouble her with these things. I know that she has enough to carry without additional perplexities being pressed upon her. I am sorry to read of her poor health, but hope she is better by this time. The burdens must weigh heavily upon her.

Now I will close by asking your forgiveness in advance for anything which appears to be harsh or abrupt in this letter. I have written it myself so that it should not be put through any stenographer's mind, as I wanted to write freely to you. We are all much as usual and always busy. I will send you some copies of The Missionary Worker which will tell you more about our work than I can write.

I shall be glad to hear from you again at your early convenience. Give our best regards to all the friends, but especially to your own family and your mother. We remember with much pleasure our visit to Australia and have not forgotten all your kindness to us while there.

Yours faithfully,

W. W. Prescott