

Debate over Chinese Settlement

Letter to the Editor from Chan Hon Fan

The *Oregonian*, February 25, 1886

A CHINAMAN'S LETTER

The following letter is printed in the exact words of Chan Hon Fan, a Chinese resident of this city. It was written by his own hand, and no change whatever has been made in printing it. As an appeal to an insensate rabble it will be wasted, of course; for even the marvelous words of Jesus of Nazareth only impelled men to crucify him; but it ought at least to lead Rev. E. Trumbull Lee back to the words of the Master, and send him to his closet and to his knees:

Portland, Feb. 24, 1886

TO THE EDITOR OF THE OREGONIAN:

I was asked by many of my countrymen "whether any respectable law-abiding citizen in this city has anything to do with the 'anti-Chinese movement,' or not."

My answer was no; but on seeing a short article in The *Oregonian* of the 18th inst. in answer to Rev. E. Trumbull Lee, it led me to look for his article.

Having read over and over carefully the article of Mr. Lee I am convinced that the sentiment of it is not only "calculated to make riot and bloodshed" but it also misrepresents a class of respectable law-abiding citizens of this fair city. When Chinese riots occur in China, attempting to injure and annoy the foreign missionaries, the Chinese converts do their best to conceal and shelter them from harm until the power of the government can come and protect them. I never heard that the Chinese converts ever exposed their foreign missionaries or inflamed the rioters to injure them. But at such a time as this, when the Chinese are everywhere exposed to danger and annoyance, both of property and in life, what benefit can it be for Rev. E. Trumbull Lee to write such false things about the Chinese?

This is too mysterious even for those whom he termed the "almoned-eyed [sic], unclean and immoral, pagan Chinese" to comprehend. A man like him brag [sic] about "our better civilization" and glorious religion that the Chinese can not compare with! Why not use his time and brain to write about what the meaning of the word civilization is and how to live to be called civilized people. Does civilization include the following words: "Be good to strangers?" Or he might preach a sermon on the "golden rule," tell what the Savior said that, "Therefore, all things whatsoever ye would that men do to you do ye even so to them," which was taught, though negatively, by our sage Confucious [sic] about two thousand four hundred years ago, and not only preach it but take pains to practice it himself. By so doing, I think the Chinese might be Christianized easier here than in their "own lands," because here they have a great deal more good teachings by example of good Christian people.

But if Mr. Trumbull Lee thinks the idea of Rev. William B. Lee, of Olympia, is right because he thinks that the “Chinese are far more likely to be made Christians in their own lands by our devoted missionaries there, than they are here in contact with the lowest orders of American society—gamblers, speculators, profane men and women, and commercial and political scoundrels of every sort,” of course any man with common sense knows that it is not the fault of the Chinese that they are surrounded by the “lowest orders of American society;” and if such is the case how can the Chinese see the beauty and excellency of Christianity? For they are not fools nor idiots. The intelligent Chinamen are like any class of sensible men. If anything comes to them that is contrary to their reason and observation, they are by no means willing to accept it. For this reason, and this alone, I want you, Rev. E. Trumbull Lee, and you, Rev. Wm. B. Lee, to know that you, being preachers of Christianity, and men that enjoy that “better civilization” in enlightened America, have, by your unkind words, become great stumbling blocks before a race of benighted souls whom Jesus came to save.

If some of the intelligent “pagan Chinamen[”] should take up Rev. E. Trumbull Lee’s article and translate it into their own language and send it back to China to be circulated there among the Chinese, then you would find out what a hard time your “devoted missionaries” would have there in Christianizing them.

I know that you do not care for this, because you are too good to be sent as a missionary to convert the “pagan Chinese,” but this is a fact. Therefore, in the name of God and humanity I entreat you, Rev. Mr. Lee, to not lower yourself by sympathizing with the lawless persons on the Chinese question, but let the true beauty and excellency of Christianity be more seen through your good sentiments and Christ-like example and then the “pagan Chinese” can better comprehend and better appreciate and may adopt your “better civilization” and Christian religion, but not otherwise. Yet why should the Chinese go? For “God hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth.” We are here by the invitation of the United States government, and will be protected here by the stipulation of international treaty rights, as the American citizens are protected by our government in China.

CHAN HON FAN.

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