A Plea for More Lay Effort in Home Missionary Work.

[A paper read by Bro. W. F. Parker at a district meeting, Hammond's Plains, and published by request.]

It appears to be assumed by a very large proportion of the membership of our churches, that "the great commission", "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." was given only to such of the disciples of Christ as should devote their whole lives to the work of preaching the gospel, that is to say, to those whom in this day we call ministers of the gospel. But Christ meant no such thing as this, nor did the disciples who received the commission from his lips so understand it. Perhaps it is too much to say that the class of persons just referred to *believe* this interpretation of Christ's command upon deliberate consideration, but as we must judge men by their conduct, we must deal largely with their *apparent* belief.

In too many instances, our conduct fixes upon us, in the view of others, sentiments we would repudiate were we to take the trouble to sift out and formulate our opinions. How forgetful we are that, like the child in Solomon's proverb, we are "known by our doings."

Assuming, then, that no Christian layman on calm consideration will deny that he is bound by the terms of Christ's plain command, were we doing in discharge of the duty? Now, it is a common thing, and very often a very convenient answer, to give the commission a broad interpretation and say,—"We need not all preach or teach in the Sabbath School, or take part in, or conduct evangelistic services and meetings for prayer; we may preach Christ and the gospel in our lives, by our conduct in the world and in the performance of the varied duties of our lives; we may give of our means; and so may we say to others, 'come with us and we will do thee good;' or lead them to the foot of the Cross by force of our example." Now, to this interpretation I have nothing to object if it is not used by Christian men and women who can and ought to do more than is here required. Our ability to work in this or that department of Christian service is the measure of our duty, and if there is a class of Christians found relying on this liberal interpretation of duty, who can do more for Christ and his Kingdom in the world than this interpretation implies, then it becomes a snare, a danger to the development of Christian character and growth in grace, and moreover a positive hindrance to the progress of the Redeemer's Kingdom.

At the bar of Christ hereafter we will be judged by what we might have done and did not, as much as by what we have done. "What she could" will be then the standard, and it is so now and always. Now, there is a large and increasing class of intelligent, well-informed and educated Christian men and women in our churches who are not at work in the Master to the extent of their capacity for service. There is immense power latent in our churches, which should be a work, and which must be brought into action before Christ's cause can prevail and he put all enemies under his feet. How large a proportion of the Christian forces in the contest are at a standstill,—mere spectators of the fight, hardly deserving the title of reserves, it is to be feared. We have been hearing much during the past year or two of the "unemployed classes" of London, and their demand for labor and bread. What about the "unemployed" classes of church members? How many of us there are who lull ourselves and our lethargic consciences into the fancied belief that we are doing on all the Lord demands of us when we attend the Sabbath services with exemplary regularity and take part in the weekly prayer-meeting, or act on one of our church committees, or give regularly a fraction of our means into the treasury of the Lord. Alas, how many who do none of these things but the first, and attend the prayer-meetings (perhaps) regularly! These are the "unemployed." Like the laborers of London, they are numerous; but, we must here drop the analogy, for they do not clamour for work, nor for the spiritual food which results from the exercise of spiritual gifts. To these classes then I appeal, and if it not be presumptuous, I would point them to their sphere for labor. This sphere I find in the line of our Home Mission efforts. It is here that Christ and the exigencies of his cause demand their presence and their energies.

Our Home Mission enterprises within the boundary of our Convention and of our Church Association are crippled just for want of their services in co-operation with the efforts now put forth. The Home Mission Board is confessedly unable to [illegible] The Association is [illegible] their functions, while their members are most inadequate for extended practical efforts in evangelization.

Here, then, is a glorious opportunity for a great auxiliary volunteer force to take the field and, co-operating with the regular organizations, to carry on the Lord's work in the various localities where help is needed. The great majority of our churches, if not all, are located within easy reach of fields, either not at present supplied with pastoral labor, or destitute altogether. Many of these churches are strong and could readily spare detachments of workers for regular service in the outlying districts, while by organizing and taking this duty in rotation, the workers themselves would be subjected to no undue tax upon their time or their resources. But the stronger churches should not have all the duty cast upon them, nor monopolize these privileges because they chance to be strong. Let every church give of its working capital as it is able to afford. If the churches of this Association averaged one faithful worker each, so employed, there would be a power abroad whose possibilities for good would be infinite. And the labors of such lay-workers should not be confined to evangelistic and Sabbath-school work altogether. Many of them could and should preach from time to time. The light hid under a bushel and the buried talent are condemned by our Saviour, who, certainly never granted our pastors a monopoly of the privilege of preaching his gospel to dying souls. Brother, if you can preach, you must, or you fail to do your duty to your Lord!

Will these opportunities for effectual service by the lay element in the churches be forever slighted? Are we Baptist laymen to slumber away our day of opportunity, when it is given unto us only once to live, and after death the judgment? Shall Christ call for volunteers for duty in the field and on the outposts in vain? Who knows but there is the place of honor in the fight? At all events, to hear the call should, and must be to obey it, if we are to honor him, and "fight the good fight" of which Paul speaks. "If ye love me ye will keep my commandments" Christ says. How can we say we love him if we refuse to do our duty, which is his will? Remember what the gentle apostle John is provoked to say on this subject. It is to be feared that our neglect of such opportunities as are so thickly spread around us is costing us very dear, in the consequent loss of various fields which are being occupied by other bodies of Christians. All honor to them and shame to us. As a whole, the laymen in some of these bodies are more wide awake to their responsibilities and opportunities for service, than we are, and they are occupying and planting portions of the Master's vineyard which should be ours. "A word to the wise is sufficient."

I would not compare the relative importance of Home and Foreign Mission work, but this I will say that no work is more important than the carrying of the gospel to the outlying and spiritually destitute sections of our own Province, by faithful and earnest evangelistic, Sabbath-school, and preaching services.

The growth of our denomination in this Province hinges upon this work, and the progress of the Redeemer's Kingdom in the Province depends upon it.

Denominational growth must come very largely from without the limits of the congregations attached more or less closely to our already established churches.

The cause of God demands that aggressive work must be undertaken outside. Recruiting stations must be opened, cottage meetings will grow into mission interests. These will swell the membership of our churches, while from them in God's own time will spring new churches, ready, in turn, to carry out themselves this law of growth and progress.

Consider the reflex influence upon the churches, which would flow from the prosecution of this work in addition to the results in the fields of labor themselves. The body developes by exercise. The arm of the black-smith becomes strong by its vigorous use. So with the exercise of intellectual gifts. And the rule is the same in spiritual things. The healthy, strong church is that, whose members are hard at work laboring to the extent of their time and talents for the Master. The church grows in strength with the spiritual development of its membership.

I have not gone into facts and figures, for the year-books, the Associational records, and the reports of the Home Mission Board bristle with statistics which should be eloquent to convince of the justice and necessity of a plea for more effort in Home Mission work by the lay membership of the churches. The field, the opportunity, the call, the demand, lie all around us and at our very door. There is no occasion to point them out in number or locality. Hear Christ's own words:—"Say not ye there are yet four months and then cometh harvest? Behold, I say unto you, lift up your eyes and look on the fields for they are white already to harvest. And he that reapeth receiveth wages and gathereth fruit unto life eternal; that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together." This suggested work might be done in connection with our District Associational Committees, or independently of them, at the choice of the workers. The pastors should be consulted as a rule, and their advice followed in the selection of fields, and mode of operation. The work may be confined to the Sabbath, or done on week days in addition, as occasion and circumstances may demand.

Not to discuss details, in conclusion let me ask every layman and woman throughout the membership of our churches, (leaving it to the individual conscience to answer) these questions:—(1) Are you doing all that in you lies for the Master's cause? (2) Are you doing anything in Home Mission work for him? (3) If you are not, why not? "To him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin." "The harvest truly is plenteous but the laborers are few, pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest that he will send forth laborers into his harvest."

Christ's Thoughts of His Death.

Rev. Alexander McLaren, D. D., concludes a recent sermon as follows:

Lastly, note how Jesus Christ thinks of his death as being the very high-water mark and purest expression of love.

"Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." Now, dear brethren, Jesus Christ's death is this high-water mark of love, only if it is a voluntary death for the sake of the whole world.

Let me press this question. What good is Jesus Christ's death to you, or to me, or to anybody if it is not that? Where do our friends, who will not see the atoning death of Christ in the New Testament, where do they find any adequate explanation of such words as these? His moral teaching is not made any more precious by his death; his example is not made any more attractive and powerful by it. What good is it? Would the world be much the poorer if the record of Christ's death was struck out of the gospels, unless he died for the sins of the whole world? Do not people that do not believe that he did, and who yet admire him and his words, practically strike the passion chapters out of the Evangelists because they do not know what to do with them? Does it do more than cast some kind of sentimental pathos back over the rest of the life, unless you come to the full-toned belief that he died for the sins of the whole world? It is only in that aspect that it becomes a manifestation of love. If he died simply in order to seal his testimony, where was his love to me, and what reason have I to love him? Very little that I can see. I do not, for my part, understand why the hearts of eighteen centuries should have turned to that Man with unselfish and uncalculating and ennobling devotion, and accepted anything rather than be untrue to him, if all their relation to him were this, that once, a long while ago, without knowing or thinking anything about me, a good man in Galilee said lovely things, and lived a beautiful life, and died a martyr and a confessor. Very beautiful, I say, but love that! Why should I? Love kindles love and nothing else. And it is only when we see on the cross the world's sacrifice that the utter devotion of a man's heart is reasonable, and is duty.

Dear brethren, I come to you to-night with this message, there is not one of us that has not, and had not, a space in Christ's thoughts and Christ's heart then. Does not, should not that melt us? Ought not that, like the midsummer sun at the Pole, shining down upon the thick-ribbed ice, to turn it all into sweet water that flows out as it feels the warmth, and sparkles in the beams that melt it? "We love him because he first loved us." And there will be neither warmth nor cleansing power in your Christianity unless it is a Christianity that grasps the Cross as the sacrifice for sin.

O! brethren, if it be indeed true that "the word became flesh and dwelt amongst us," and not only "dwelt amongst us," but died for us all, and then what love in return but must be inadequate, and what rapture of praise can be exaggeration?

It is so. He loved you then, and he loves you now. He died in your stead, "to bless you in turning away, every one of you, from your iniquities," and he lives to make you partakers of his own life. O! I beseech you, do not meet such love with indifference. Beware of thoughts of him and of his work which rob men of the benefits of his death. Let his love kindle yours, and claim by humble faith your share in that universal blessing which is flung broadcast over the world by the death of him "that loved you, and gave himself for you."

A Five Dollar Blessing.

"How low folks are in their minds!" said Brother Smith to Brother Brown, as they two sat by the fire in the basement on a Thursday evening, waiting for the people to gather to the weekly meeting. "How the church is fallen into an unseemly disregard of its ordinances; they are neglectful of social meetings, of the communion table and Sabbath preaching; I am quite disappointed in the results of the labors of our new minister. He seemed when he came among us a man of capacity, with a good share of the Spirit; and there were indications of a revival for a time. But all that has passed by, and church and minister seem to have gone in a body to 'Egypt.' It is a most deplorable state of things. I wish the brethren and sisters might see it in this light, and betake themselves to prayer and heart-searchings that the cause of our spiritual barrenness might be ferreted out, and, through repentance, the Lord's anger appeased, so that his hand might be stretched forth towards us in pardon and mercy."

Brother Brown listened to the speaker with attention, and made answer in a similar strain, bewailing the lowness of Zion, and wishing for "better days."

"What can we do to bring about these 'better days'?" asked Brother Smith, putting a few more sticks of wood into the fire. "This is very poor fuel," he added. "I'll warrant me Brother Dix don't burn any such in his own house."

"He sells his marketable wood at six dollars a cord," said Brother Brown; "burns three limbs at home, and picks up wet stuff for the church."

"That is not treating God's house with proper respect," said Brother Smith. "No wonder Brother Dix is in a low state of mind, a back slidden, lukewarm state. He should supply the church with as good fires as he has at home, to say the least."

"He says he can't find wood for the meeting house, and pay a subscription to the minister, too,—it is too heavy a draft upon him,—so he sells his best wood to get money to meet the subscription," remarked Brother Brown.

"This is but a subterfuge to hide his narrowness, said Brother Smith. "Brother Dix is able to do much more than he does for the support of the gospel. I wish I had the money at interest that he has. But to return to the point from which we have wandered,—what can we do to improve our spiritual health and vigor?"

"I have thought upon this point considerably," said Brother Brown, "and have about came to the conclusion that we shall never accomplish much in spiritual things with our present minister. He seemed to run well for a season, but now all is at a standstill—nay, even going backward. Our convert of a year ago, where are they? You can't lay your finger on one out of three of them. One of the regular prayer meetings has completely died out, the other is just ready to expire, and here we two sit to represent the weekly meeting. The minister is not in his place, church members are engaged in their worldly affairs. We need a man who shall be able to get up a grand awakening."

"But whom can we get?" asked Brother Smith. "With our means we can't command the first talent, you know. Our minister is a pretty fair sort of a man it he had but more of the Spirit, though I regret to say he is becoming rather cold and careless. Think of his neglecting the weekly prayer meeting! How can we expect the members will be otherwise than backward if the minister sets the example?"

"I never knew him absent before," said Brother Brown, "and think he must be unexpectedly called away, or something unusual detains him at home."

"I should have thought he would have sent word to the brethren then," said Brother Smith, rising and consulting his watch. "It is an hour past time for services to commence, so there will not be anybody else here to day, and we may as well go home."

Brother Brown arose, and while the two were preparing to leave, some light feet were heard ascending the vestry stairs, and a lady stood before them.

"Oh," she said," "You are about leaving; I have hurried as fast as I could get down here to let the people know, if any were gathered for weekly meeting, the reason of the minister's absence. His wife is sick, and he got out of dry wood yesterday. This morning he expected a load, but it didn't come, so he had to hire a team and go after it. He said he would try hard to get back by half past six, but if he failed, I must endeavor to leave his wife long enough to let the people who might gather at the vestry know the cause of his absence. Mrs. Denham is so sick, and I have had such a struggle to keep her room comfortable with the green wood, that I have not been able to get down here till now."

"I am sorry there is sickness in Mr. Denham's family," said Brother Smith. "Ministers are very apt to have sickly wives, I believe."

"You are right, and no wonder," returned the lady.

"I don't know why you said that, remarked Brother Smith.

"It would require an unusually strong constitution to endure the anxiety to which ministers' wives are ordinarily subjected," said the lady.

"Anxieties!" repeated Brother Smith. "What anxieties have they beyond women in general?"

"Most women when they eat one meal have some tolerably definite idea as to where the next is to come from," was the response; "but ministers' wives don't always have this comfortable assurance. I know Mrs. Denham don't.

"Are the minister's family complaining of their fare among us?" asked Brother Smith, rather sensitively.

"No,—at least I never heard them complain of anything, though how a woman can get along as Mrs. Denham does is surprising to me. In feeble health, with two small children, company at a moment's warning, and often the slenderest stock out of which to prepare acceptable food to set before guests; a poor inconvenient house, scanty furniture, and never a month's wood in the shed even in the dead of winter."

"You are making out quite a case," interrupted Brother Brown; "but I do not know who is to blame for this state of things. When Mr. Denham came among us we subscribed certain sums for his support, and expect to meet our obligations like Christian men. He knew about the sum we would be able to raise. Had he deemed it insufficient, he was at liberty to say as much, and seek some other field of labor."

The lady bowed, and glanced about the vestry. "How many came in to attend the meeting this afternoon?" she inquired.

"Only myself and Brother Brown," was Brother Smith's reply. "Religion is at a low ebb with us. We had been deploring the luke-warm state of our church when you entered."

"What did you conclude was the cause of it?" asked the lady, resting against a form, and putting her feet to the warm fire.

"We think there are more causes than one," Brother Smith replied. "I suppose some of us may have neglected duties and thus displeased our Master. Then we are all apt, more or less, to lean on the minister, and ours doesn't seem to be in the place he was some months ago. Brother Brown and I have been considering whether or no, when the year is up, it will not be as well to let him go and try another one."

"Then you have become dissatisfied with Mr. Denham?" said the lady.

"Well, we should not wish to say that exactly," was the reply. "Perhaps the man does as well as he can, though he has not the life and power of some ministers. I have not been as blessed under his preaching as I expected to be at the outset, and Brother Brown's experience corresponds with my own."

"Yes," said Brother Brown, approaching. "I confess Mr. Denham has not come up to my expectations. When he first came among us, I thought he was going to be an instrument in the hands of God of accomplishing much good in our church and community, but these prospects are quite overcast. It looks gloomy ahead. Mr. Denham has lost much of his spirituality, or I am no judge of such matters. The blessing I obtain from his ministration is very small."

"If you have got a five dollar blessing I don't see what more you could expect," said the lady, in a quiet tone of voice.

Her words were electric. The two men looked quickly at each other, and turned their steps towards the door.

Brother Smith and Brother Brown communed with themselves that night. They were both worth their thousands. The little woman at the vestry was dependent on her own exertions for support. Yet on the minister's subscription list her name was down for an equal sum with Brother Smith and Brother Brown, and she had found no dearth of spirituality in Mr. Denham's sermons. On the contrary, they had fed her soul from Sabbath to Sabbath. She saw the minister's family were pinched in every way. The very small salary was slow and irregular about coming in, and they often lacked the comforts if not the necessaries of life. These things depressed Mr. Denham. He was comparatively young, and peculiarly diffident,—greatly lacking self-assertion. He could not go to men of wealth, years his senior, and ask for the pittance they had subscribed towards his salary. But he felt that God would withhold his blessing from those who treated his cause so niggardly, and prayed in his closet that the little church might be delivered from the thrall of covetousness. It was a hard place to work, and, when added to other difficulties, his wife fell sick, Mr. Denham felt he would not be sorry to end his labors there with the closing year.

But "a word spoken in season how good it is!" and the little woman who visited the vestry on monthly meeting day had spoken this word.

"If you have got a five dollar blessing, I don't know what more you could expect."

What more truly! They were amply able to pay twenty five; such a sum would be no more for them than was five for the vestry woman. They had raised two hundred and fifty dollars for their minister,—he needed five hundred. It was only a reasonably compensation for his services and support. He did not ask it,—the agreement had been that he should accept what they could raise. Yet it was a mean thing to half support a servant of God. How could they, as a church, expect God's blessing, till they righted this wrong in their midst!

Brother Brown and Brother Smith rent their boys next day with a load of dry wood and kindlings to the minister. Then Brother Smith, who held the subscription list, drew it forth, and placed a figure 1 at the left hand of the 5, which stood against his name, so now it read:—Alpheus Smith —fifteen dollars."

He thought it was an improvement, and concluded to go round the parish and see how many others would be of like opinion. He found several, and quite a little purse of ready money was made up for the minister. Brother Smith and Brother Brown found the sermons more spiritual at once. The prayer-meetings put on new life, and ere long there were indications of a genuine revival of religion.

Brother Smith and Brother Brown openly declared that they believed that covetousness was the great sin in their midst at which God was angry. Brother Dix felt the force of the declaration, and hauled two cords of his best marketable wood into the church sheds for winter fires.

When Mr. Denham's year came round, instead of seeking out a new field with heart depressed by manifold temporal trials, he was laboring in the midst of a protracted meeting, where crowds of anxious souls flocked to the altar seeking salvation through Jesus.

Brother Smith liked his fifteen dollar blessing so well, that he thought he must make it twenty-five the next year, so he did,—also Brother Brown, and a good many others doubled their first subscription.

How strong that once weak church now grew! What a power of good it became in the community! What happy converts went down beneath its baptismal waves! How strong were its laymen in the spirit and power of truth! What godly pride that pastor felt in his people! Yes, and even the wicked and careless said:—

"There is a set of men and women who practice as they preach; they honor their profession; they give without stint for the support of their cause;—there must be something in a gospel for which men will sacrifice worldly gain."

Oh, professed Christian, are you starving your soul on a Five Dollar Blessing, and wondering at your hunger? "Go ye and do likewise!"—*Sel.*

The Sentence of Jesus.

A COPY OF THE ORIGINAL DECREE AS ISSUED BY PONTIUS PILATE.

The following extraordinary document is instructive if true, invenious if false:

From the London Tablet.—A correspondent of the *Notes and Queries* extracts from the *Kolnische Zeitung* what is called a "correct transcript of the sentence of death pronounced against Jesus Christ." The following is a copy of the most memorable judicial sentence which has ever been pronounced in the annals of the world, namely, that of death against the Saviour, with the remarks that the journal *Le Droit* has collected, the knowledge of which must be interesting in the highest degree to every Christian. Until now we are not aware that it has ever been made public in the German papers. The sentence is word for word as follows:

Sentence pronounced by Pontius Pilate, Intendent of the Province of Lower Galile, that Jesus of Nazareth shall suffer death by the cross. In the seventeenth year of the reign of the Emperor Tiberius, and on the 25th of the month of March, in the most holy city of Jerusalem, during the Pontificate of Annas and Caiaphas, Pontius Pilate, Intendent of the Province of Lower Galilee, sitting in judgment in the presidential seat of the Prætorium, sentences Jesus Christ of Nazareth to death on a cross, between two robbers, as the numerous and notorious testimonials of the people prove: 1. Jesus is a misleader. 2. He has excited the people to sedition. 3. He is an enemy to the laws. 4 He calls himself the Son of God. 5. He calls himself falsely the King of Israel. 6. He went into the Temple followed by a multitude carrying palms in their hands. Orders: The first centurion Quintus Cornelius to bring him to the place of execution, forbids all persons, rich or poor, to prevent the execution of Jesus. The witnesses who have signed the execution against Jesus are: 1, Daniel Robani, Pharisee; 2 John Zorobabel; 3. Raphael Robani; 4 Capet. Jesus to be taken out at Jerusalem through the gate of Tournes.

The sentence is engraved on a plate of brass in the Hebrew language, and on its sides the following words: "A similar plate has been sent to each tribe." It was discovered in the year 1280 in the city of Aquill (Aquilla?) in the kingdom of Naples, by a search made for the discovery of Roman antiquities, and remained there until it was found by the Commissaries of Art in the French Army of Italy. Up to the time of the campaign in Southern Italy it was preserved in the sacristy of the Carthusians, near Naples, where it was kept in a box of ebony. Since then the relic has been kept in the chapel of Caserta. The Carthusians obtained it by their petitions that the plate might be kept by them, which was an acknowledgement of the sacrifices which they made for the French Army. The French translation was made literally by members of the Commission of Arts. Denon had a facsimilie of the plate engraved, which was bought by Lord Howard on the sale of his cabinet for 2,590 francs. There seems to be no historical doubt as to the authenticity of this. The reasons of the sentences correspond exactly with those of the gospels.—*Christian Advocate*

Mercantile Savagery.

The stories from Madagascar published in last Friday's *Times* by Mr. Sturge the well-known Friend, are very serious. Madagascar, the hope and pride of Christian missions, is becoming the prey of godless trading, and, after abolishing slavery, is now again a market for the worst of all slave trades. In the west of the island forced labor in gold mines under the French is in full swing; eastward, British settlers, so-called Christians, "often highly educated," are guilty of maintaining a concubinage slave trade which is described as the more cruel of the two, both being cruel and shameful. Mr. Sturge declares, from his information, that a French and British gunboat could easily stop the whole wickedness, but the Foreign "have not the least notion" of checking the traffic which goes on under their flag, and is described as "enormous." We are doing nothing, and our consul is himself threatened. Mercantile savagery has its way in the beautiful island of Madagascar, and the Hova Government is coerced into contempt of its own law. "Better fifty years of Europe than a cycle of Cathay" What does Cathay say to that?—*London British Weekly.*

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Humbug.

Barnum said, "The American People like to be humbugged." This may be true in the line of entertainment, but not where life is at stake. A man with consumption, or any lingering disease looking Death in the face and seeking to evade his awful grasp, does not like to be trifled with. So with confidence we place before our readers Nature's great remedy, Dr. Pierce's Golden Medical Discovery, a sure relief for that long train of diseases resulting from impure blood, such as Consumption, Chronic Nasal Catarrh, Liver Complaint, Kidney Disorder, Dyspepsia, Sick Headache, Scrofula and General Debility. Time tried and thoroughly tested, it stands without an equal! Any druggist.

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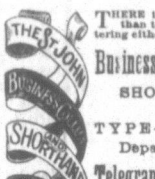

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