

# Christian Messenger.

A RELIGIOUS AND GENERAL FAMILY NEWSPAPER.

"Not slothful in business: fervent in spirit."

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## Religious.

For the Christian Messenger.

### HOME MISSIONARY WORK.

THE CIRCULAR LETTER OF THE WESTERN BAPTIST ASSOCIATION, CONVENED AT HEBRON, YARMOUTH, SEPTEMBER 25TH, TO THE CHURCHES OF WHICH IT IS COMPOSED.

Dear Brethren,

We propose in this annual letter to direct your thoughts to the claims of HOME MISSIONS.

It is a gratifying fact that increased interest is being manifested in our Foreign Missionary operations. But while the churches of the Maritime Provinces may contemplate with a good degree of satisfaction, their 27 native preachers toiling on in various parts of the kingdom of Burmah, seeking to win their benighted countrymen to Christ, their much esteemed sister De Wolfe at Basson, labouring assiduously for the enlightenment and salvation of heathen women, and the expected departure, at an early date, for the Foreign field of their beloved Brother William George and his excellent companion—all supported by their funds—it is at the same time deplorable that we are doing so little for the spread of the Gospel among the destitute of our own Provinces.

It is, indeed, singular, that Newfoundland, with a population of 120,000 and with its 70 shepherdless Baptists, that the Bermuda with a population of 15,000, and at least some holding Baptist sentiments, that the Coast of Labrador, with its thousands of sturdy fishermen speaking the English language—and all so easily accessible to us—have elicited as yet, no effort on our part to carry to their people that Gospel that we enjoy and so highly prize.

And it is to be feared, that while considerable has been done, there has been a mournful deficiency of effort to evangelize the destitute regions, even of the Provinces comprised in the Convention.

It is our present aim to offer a few considerations and suggestions which we hope may stimulate the churches to more vigorous and systematic effort in the cause of Home Missions.

1. Our churches, many of whom have become strong in number and material wealth, have been planted through the self-denying missionary labours of that devoted band of men known as the *Fathers*, and it seems but reasonable that in extending our borders as a denomination the zeal that characterized those pioneer men of God should be unimitated by us. While as ministers we fail to extend our labours to "the regions beyond," but in the exercise of a spirit of selfishness confine our efforts entirely within the limits of our own particular field, or church, we shew ourselves unworthy successors of such men. And while as churches we manifest unwillingness to contribute generously of our substance, and, if necessary, even give up for a time the services of our pastors for the sake of bearing the Gospel to the destitute portions of our land, and with God's blessing of planting additional churches, we certainly manifest but little appreciation of that gospel; understand imperfectly its teachings, and illy exemplify the spirit that should actuate churches established in connexion with the faithful, self-denying missionary toils of God's servants.

2. Not only should the grateful remembrance of the self-sacrificing missionary labours of the early ministers of our Denomination in this Province, urge us to be more faithful in seeking to widen the sphere of our evangelistic work, but the remembrance also of the great things God has done for us in sending to us the Gospel of His grace, and, by His Holy Spirit, making us the happy recipients of its blessings should excite in our hearts the profoundest gratitude and prompt to consecration in this and every other department of christian duty. Instead of the strange spiritual lethargy, too often evinced by professors of christianity, we should reasonably expect that motives excited by the contemplation of the love and grace of God in Christ toward His people, delivering them from the dominion of sin and Satan, making them the heirs of Himself and joint-heirs with Christ, and ultimately elevating them to the bliss and glory of Heaven should lead, not only to holy aspirations after the presence and image of their Saviour, but also to burning zeal and whole-hearted benevolence in spreading abroad the glad tidings of salvation.

3. We should also be prompted to devotion in the work of Home Missions by motives drawn from the Saviour's words—"Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature." In regarding that commission we are not to confine our thoughts and efforts to the remotest portions of the world. Duty demands of us to bear, as far as possible, the gospel to our antipodes. And there is something sublime in the idea of sending forth messengers of salvation to those nations plunged in the darkness of idolatry in far distant lands. Much financial expenditure and much danger to human life is involved. The amount necessary for the outfit and passage of one missionary family destined to Burmah is quite sufficient to sustain a missionary in the Home field for three years or more. But while there may not be in the view of some the same moral grandeur in connexion with Home Mission labour, still the great commission

unquestionably includes those perishing for the bread of life who are near at hand as well as those far remote. Hence our duty. The Saviour's directions to His Apostles to "begin at Jerusalem" favors the idea that in extending the Gospel to far off heathen lands, we should not overlook the destitute nearer home. And in faithful endeavours to evangelize the needy portions of our Province we have to inspire us the example of the Great Author and Founder of missions who, during the three and a half years of His public ministry, went about through the Provinces of Palestine preaching the Kingdom of God.

4. Considerations for enlarged effort in our Home Mission work may be gathered from a survey of the field. In connexion with the Western Association there is a large number of feeble churches unable, singly, to support a Pastor. These were organized under favorable auspices and with joy received into this body. Not favored with missionary or pastoral labour they dwindle. This accounts for the fact that some do not report themselves by letter. And this retrograde course, unless speedily arrested by aid from abroad, will be continued until they lose their visibility, and thus churches that once promised to be valuable accessions of strength and influence, for the want of the fostering care of Home Missions sadly disappoint the hopes that had been cherished concerning them.

And there are scattered along our Atlantic coast and along the margin of our bays, as well as in the interior in connexion with our gold fields and in sparsely agricultural and lumbering districts, villages and settlements that present inviting fields for missionary labour. Do not these feeble, dying churches, those destitute settlements and villages call loudly and imploringly for increased effort.

And it should be borne in mind that the Western N. S. Baptist-Association comprises a membership, considerably larger than any of the six sister Associations included in the Convention. This membership in the aggregate probably possesses more wealth than that of either of the other bodies. Within our limits, however, we have less missionary ground than either of the sister Associations. Hence the importance of judiciously and prayerfully enquiring as to our duty to widen the sphere of our operations. It is true that the support of the Mission to the Acadian-French rests largely upon our Western Churches, and the success of the past warrants continued effort to give to that interesting people the Word of Life. Still it is painfully evident that in proportion to our numbers and ability, and in view of the wide and effectual doors presenting themselves on every hand, we are doing far too little for the Home field.

5. The salutary reflex influence that would doubtless flow from enlarging our Home Mission efforts, affords another motive to arise and attempt greater things for God. It is an obvious fact that many of our churches do not give in proportion to their ability. And it may be that here is one secret of the cold, fruitless, stationary condition of many of our more wealthy churches. "There is that scattereth and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet but it tendeth to poverty." If then we would enjoy peace and prosperity within our borders, let us "as good stewards of the manifold grace of God" seek to do what we can to give the gospel we love to those deprived of its inestimable blessings.

And now, dear Brethren, having stated these motives for the enlargement of our Home Mission Agency, we proceed to submit for the consideration of the Churches and as the result of much prayerful thought, the following suggestions which we feel confident, if properly carried out, will, with the Divine blessing, realize the results desired:

1. We suggest the desirableness, wherever practicable, of combining several weak churches situated within a convenient distance from each other, and of constituting the same a Home Mission Station, to be placed in charge of a suitable Brother who shall be appointed in concurrence with the wishes of said churches, and who shall labour as a Missionary Pastor. All such appointments to be made with a view to permanence and with the understanding that, as soon as possible, the stations become self-sustaining. Meanwhile the amount raised by the combined effort of these churches to be supplemented from the Home Mission treasury, so as to afford to all such missionary pastors a comfortable support.

2. We further suggest that in entering upon new mission stations—and inviting openings are to be found on every hand—such new stations be commenced with a view to the organization of Baptist Churches and the establishment of permanent interests. And so the appointment of Missionaries to these stations should ordinarily not be for 3 or 6 weeks merely, but for 6 months or a year, and with a view to a permanent settlement. Annapolis Royal, the ancient Capital of this Province, might be mentioned as an illustrative case. Let a suitable brother be appointed to that town as a station, including some portions of the surrounding country, for one year, and there is the highest probability that with God's blessing a church in that time could be gathered and an interest nearly self-sustaining established.

3. We suggest also that in view of the fact that we have less missionary ground within our limits and more ability than either the Central or Eastern N. S. Associations, it might be well to enquire into the propriety of extending our Home Missionary operations to other portions of our Province, and if practicable, to destitute regions of neighbouring Provinces.

And, in conclusion, we would further state that, in the opinion of some of our brethren, it is desirable to take early steps, in concert with sister Associations, to blend the different Home Mission organizations of Nova Scotia, and thus constitute one thoroughly organized, vigorous and efficient Home Mission Society having the evangelization of the destitute regions of Nova Scotia Proper and Cape Breton as its first grand object. This involves the idea of one Central Board extending vigorously its agencies to all parts of the Province—an idea by no means Utopian. In the Province of New Brunswick, both in connexion with the Baptists and Free Christian Baptists, and in the Provinces of Ontario and Quebec efficient Home Mission Societies exist comprising the whole of their respective Provinces, each having one Central Board and all doing a great work in extending the Kingdom of Christ. In the United States our brethren have their great American Home Mission Society, embracing within the sphere of its operations the entire land, accomplishing, under God, a gigantic work for Christ and the denomination. In the last two years nearly 14,000 converts have been baptized as a part of the result of its labours.

Thus consolidated, and with a specific object before us, we would be able, with an improved system for raising benevolent funds—another desideratum—to accomplish much more for souls than we are now doing. We would then be in a position to concentrate, when expedient, our united energies on some of the inviting Home Mission fields beyond the boundaries of our own Province.

The Baptists of Ontario are about commencing Home Mission work in some part of the great North West and we would doubtless be heartily welcomed to join them. Could we respond to such a proposition the results would be glorious, not only in the evangelization of that great and promising country, but also as introductory to a more extensive union of all the Baptists of the Dominion in the establishment of an independent Foreign Mission in some portion of the heathen world.

That these considerations and suggestions may be well pondered by the churches and subserve the best interests of the Kingdom of Christ by resulting in more enlarged, persevering and systematic effort in our Home Mission work is our earnest prayer.

### WHY THOMAS WAS NOT AT THE PRAYER MEETING.

"But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came."

Why was Thomas absent from the prayer-meeting? If his excuse had been a good one, I think it would have been mentioned, or the bad consequences would not have followed which did follow. It is a significant fact that his absence is recorded for all ages to read and know. And it is very plain that it *might* have been one of several reasons.

He might have been a man of great taste, one who loved the magnificent temple-service, one who enjoyed "the cymbals" and "the cornets" and "the organ," "the trumpets" and "the shawms"—the voices of the trained choir who made Chenaniah the master of song; but he could not enjoy that prayer meeting. Why, they only read a chapter in the Bible, and then they sung—and such singing! Why, there was Peter's rough, heavy voice, always out of tune; and there was Matthew, always humming on one chord; and there was Bartholomew, always pitching the tune too high or too low, sometimes almost breaking down, and often drawing over the same old tunes. Oh, if they could only have had such singing at the prayer-meeting as they had at the great temple! Alas! Thomas cannot enjoy such singing.

And then his taste is offended again at the manner of conducting the meeting. What tame work they make of talking. How they tell over the words which they heard Christ speak, again and again. How they tell us of his calling them, again and again. How Thomas has to hear about the same thing over and over, when he wants to hear something original, something startling. Oh, if Gamaliel, or some great doctor of divinity, could lead the meeting and pour out an eloquent dissertation; if some learned scribe would come in and lead the meeting and tell us all he knew; but Thomas never enjoys meetings conducted by laymen. He finds fault because they sing old tunes, when he knows they cannot sing any other. His taste is offended because the brethren talk and pray so uninterestingly, when he knows that he never set a better example of a rightly-conducted meeting. The carriage is small, but he wants a steam-engine to draw it. Or perhaps this is not the reason why Thomas "was not there when Jesus came."

He is a man of many acquaintances, perhaps, and last night he was at a party at the house of Zabdi the son of Zechariah, near the temple, and the party was very large and very fashionable, and Thomas stayed very late. It was a delightful party, and the entertainment was fine, and there were many strangers from abroad, and the music was exquisite, and the dancing was continued till a very late hour, and somehow or other Thomas does not feel like going to the prayer-meeting to-night. James and John and Peter do not seem so refined, nor such real gentlemen, as those he met at Zabdi's house. The women who will