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Why Christian Work Fails.

The work of advancing the Kingdom of Christ has been placed in the hands of his people. By the agency of men and women, the truth is taught in various ways, sinners are convinced of sin and directed to the Saviour. But in all this great effort for the reformation and salvation of men, the Master himself is the leader and success depends on his blessing. We are his agents and he uses us as instruments. He makes his people fishers of men, to gather souls into his Kingdom. He makes them winners of souls, to bring men to him and save them. He enables them to do work which angels cannot do, and doing it faithfully, the seal of his blessing rests on it.

But often there are sad disappointments. Christian work in the home is often ineffectual in bringing the children to Christ. Many parents have mourned over failures, and have looked sadly on the careless and wayward turning further from God. Weeping in sorrow, they have said, "Why have we not succeeded in leading our children to the Saviour?" Teachers in Sabbath-school also are forced to look on careless youth dropping out of the ranks and lost to the Church, and ask, "Why was our work in vain?" Many a minister has preached to hearers who remain unimpressed by the truth, and in disappointment and weariness has cried, "Who hath believed my report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" Often is it, that sin abounds in the face of all the efforts put forth to check it. Souls are perishing, day by day sinking under the power of sin and led captive by Satan at his will. Why cannot more be turned from sin to God? Why cannot devils be cast out in these days, the devils of drink or of profanity or of vileness? Never were there such facilities for church work, but how many need to be reformed and sanctified and saved! Why cannot more impression be made on the world? Why are not more genuine conversions taking place? Why is not all church work more effective? These are pertinent questions, and we should not rest until we have a satisfactory answer. We would do well to go to Jesus with the inquiry, as the disciples did of old. They were baffled and compelled to admit their failure to cast out the devil and cure the child that had been brought to them, and then came and asked Jesus, "Why could we not cast him out?" So Christians, baffled and discouraged, should not give up in despair, but go at once and inquire the cause of failure. Let them ask the Lord why is not our work in the home and in the church more effective? Why is sin so bold and the Church so weak in opposing it? Why are the ways of the world so acceptable to the Church and the opinions of the Church so slowly received? Why does not religion take hold of men and influence their hearts and lives in a more decided manner? These would be timely questions now to bring to Jesus.

We cannot have much doubt about the answer he would give to these inquiries. He would say now, as he said to his disciples of old, "It is because of your un-

belief." When faith languishes every Christian grace is weak. Courage, patience, long suffering and hope will soon wither and dwindle away. Faith is the root on which they all grow. When sin is strong, the world is bold, few are converted to God and his cause does not make progress, the reason usually lies in the weakness of faith in Christian people. They have not lost their religion, but it has declined and their faith is no longer the active and overcoming principle, which it once was. The same Israelites, who at one time went through the Red Sea in triumph, at another time shrunk from danger like cowards, when they had even reached the border of the promised land. Their leader was the same Moses who had wrought so many wonders before their eyes, but their faith was not the same. So it is with Christians at this day. They may be sincere and may have gained victories over sin and Satan, but if faith grows feeble, the heart will lose its boldness and the hands hang down in weakness, and little effective service will be rendered. We can hear the voice of Mr. Moody, as in one of his impassioned utterances he exclaimed, "Think of Satan coming into a home and seizing a boy and carrying him off to destruction and the parents in weakness of faith, looking on, and not having power to prevent it!"

This is the secret of failure. The minister says, "If I only had another congregation to labor in;" the people say, "If we only had another pastor;" the old say, "If the young would do as they should," and the young say, "If all the elders and the people would only stir themselves;" while all look helplessly at each other. But a revival of faith would help all to see more clearly and work more valiantly.

We need only consider what unbelief does, when it dwells in us. It fills the heart with unconcern for sinners. If one has little anxiety for the unsaved, and absorbed in other things, forgets about them and their desperate condition, he can do little for their welfare. Unbelief also checks all efforts to do good. It paralyzes everything. When it enters a minister's heart his preaching is timid and pointless and falls powerless. When it is in the people, they sit unmoved under the most solemn appeals. Sin is not rebuked and sinners are not invited to the Saviour. But worse than all, unbelief checks prayer. Weak faith restrains prayer, comes with no strong petitions, and expects no great answers. Prayers from cold hearts are spiritless and unavailing. How can one pray for sinners and bear them before God in prevailing supplication if his soul is dull and languid through unbelief? "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me," said the Psalmist. Yet prayer is essential to all success, and when it ceases, there is nothing to call down divine power.

What a glorious thing a revival of faith would be in the whole Church! No pastor nor church need wait till it comes, or is general. Let the cry at once arise, "Help my unbelief" and the blessing of a revived faith will not be sought in vain.

"Betwixt Two."

By L. C. Wainwright.

Upon the far horizon meet,
The sky and sea, and naught divides,
But some dim line, the cloudy fleet,
From distant barks that stem the tides.

The skies above, the floods below,
Commingle shimmering waves of blue,
The mirrored sunbeams, rippling flow,
And o'er the waves their course pursue.

The cloud-reflecting waters spread,
And merge into the bending sky;
Between the waters overhead,
And floods beneath, I scarce descry.

'Tis thus that heavenly glories lend
Unto the earth their holy light,
And bid awakened hopes ascend,
As faith attends with raptured sight.

As 'twere between the sky and sea,
Mid-way I stand between these two—
Desiring there with Christ to be,
Content to wait in service true.

The heavenly glories lift the heart,
To contemplate the things above,
While duty bids fulfil our part,
And wait on God's unchanging love.

A Century Ago.

By Rev. Dr. R. M. Patterson.

What was the numerical strength of our American Presbyterian Church a century ago? How many communicant members had it in 1801?

The first year in which the Presbyteries reported the number to the General Assembly was 1807; near enough to the opening of the century to enable us to make a reliable estimate. In that year, 24 of the 29 Presbyteries, reported 17,871. Five Presbyteries failed to report. If they were as strong as the reporting, which is not, however, likely, the full number was between 20,000 and 21,000. Certainly, it was not more than that. The comparison of that number with several other figures will buttress an estimate for 1801.

I have elsewhere suggested the following:

1. Every seven years following 1807, for nearly half a century, the number of communicants about doubled itself. The same ratio of growth from 1800 to 1807 would have opened the century with no more than 10,000 or 12,000.

2. Between 1801 and 1807 there was an increase in the number of ministers from 190 to 330. If the increase of communicants was in the same proportion, that would again show about 12,000 in 1801.

3. In 1807, the proportion of ministers, 330, to communicants, 17,871, was one to 54. In 1801, there were 190 ministers; the proportion of 54 to one would give a little over 10,000 communicants.

All these lines converge to about the same number.

But there is another comparison that may carry more weight; for it will directly meet the objection that it seems preposterous to place a membership at so low a figure nearly a century after the organization of the General Presbytery; especially with the large immigration of Presbyterians reported during the first half of that century, and the wonderful revival work of Whitefield. Philadelphia, however, gives us some figures

which will throw light upon the subject; for the Church in it has been a very fair representative of the Church at large.

The last quarter of the Eighteenth century was marked by no growth here—rather by a retrogression. The seventeen years' division (1741-1758;) the protracted revolutionary war; the rampant infidelity that was prevalent; the low standard of morality in the Church and the world; these things had had a blighting influence. But after the opening of the century a great change took place, and in 1807 the number of communicants was 746; an increase in the six years of 64 per cent., or nearly 11 per cent. a year. Now, the same proportionate increase in the Church at large would run from about 12,000 in 1801 to 20,000 in 1807. Large as a net increase of nearly 11 per cent. a year, either exceptionally for one year, or for a series of years, would now be, it was even greater after 1807; in 1808, it was more than 20 per cent.; in 1809, about the same. An increase this year proportionally equal to that would have given us in our whole Church, nearly 200,000 more members than we had last year, instead of the 23,782 reported.

Another comparison will put the matter in still clearer light. In 1801 the Philadelphia church membership was 455. It is now 41,889—an increase of almost 92 fold. The membership of our whole Church now is 1,007,689. Taking the same proportionate growth, divide that figure by 92, and we should have about 11,000 as the number in 1801. If the Southern membership should be included, as in the succession, the total, 1,233,579, divided by 92, would be about 13,500. If the Cumberland also should be included, it would still only be about 15,000.

Our church membership in Philadelphia, I believe, was not as large at the opening of the century as it had been before the breaking out of the Revolutionary War. One harmful influence was felt here more seriously than through the country at large—the successive visitations of the yellow fever from 1793 to 1802, which at times largely depopulated the city; but the other influences, which blocked the progress of the Church, were as potential everywhere.

The question I have raised is of special interest now in connection with Twentieth century observances, and especially with our Church progress. It has been assumed hitherto that our denomination entered the century about 20,000 strong. If that were so the progress since has been great. But if my estimate be correct, it has been much greater, and places us in the front "forward" rank.

My interest in our American historical and statistical questions began with my appointment to prepare a paper on the Church in Philadelphia, for the great Ter-Centenary Celebration in 1872; and has been helpful through successive appointments by the old Philadelphia Synod, the Synod of Pennsylvania, the Presbytery of Chester, and the Philadelphia Ministerial Association, to prepare similar papers for other historic celebrations. These papers have been published; the last expanded into my volume, "American Presbyterianism in Its Development and Growth," which largely gives the official statistics of the Church in its successive stages. And all these have deepened the conviction expressed in this article, against my earlier supposition, on the question herein raised.

The Century's Presbyterian Panorama.

And now, could we take our stand on some elevated point from which the panorama of Presbyterian progress in the United States during the Nineteenth century, could be seen, as it has been enrolled before the great Head of the Church, who "was and is to come," it would be a grand view that we should have:

Twelve or fourteen thousand poor Presbyterian communicants, living along the Atlantic coast; organized in about five hundred little congregations, the half of them the mere shadow of a name, averaging in size perhaps 25 members each; with 190 ministers preaching to them, and leading them in worship, from Sabbath to Sabbath, in little edifices no better than log cabins, the most of them; without a Sabbath-school, a missionary organization or a Young People's Association; raising less than a hundred thousand dollars a year for all Church and benevolent causes.

These entering the century with a strong faith, toughened by the struggle, civil and ecclesiastical, through which they had passed, but which had left them weak in numbers; toiling on; pressing on with the advancing population and settlement of the country; enlarging, increasing, expanding, year by year, until every State and Territory has been entered, and Mexico, South America, Cuba, Porto Rico, Africa, Laos, Persia, India, Syria, Siam, the Philippines, colonized with missionary posts; three General Assemblies representing 10,524 ministers, 13,666 churches, 1,413,771 communicant members, who worship in splendid edifices, representing in value about a hundred million of dollars; raising annually now about seventeen millions for church and benevolent enterprises, and expending in all during the century more than a hundred millions in benevolent work, and four hundred millions in congregational support; with thoroughly organized agencies for the management of their different causes, the women and children everywhere active with them in the good work; with over fifteen thousand Sabbath-schools, containing more than thirteen hundred thousand members; with munificently endowed theological seminaries and schools for the education of the young and of students for the ministry; with hospitals for the suffering, and orphanages for the shelter of the fatherless; the whole country covered by these workers and their operations; more than two millions of converts gathered to the table of the Lord and trained for glory. Could we see it all in one view, it would be an inspiring sight.

It is not, indeed, all that should have passed under the scrutiny of the all-seeing One; not all that faithfulness on the part of the Church should have accomplished; but it has been such a perseverance of the saints' progress, that even a false prophet who should take his stand with us wishing to curse, must yield to blessing, and cry out Balaam-like, "According to this time, it shall be said, What hath God wrought?"

The supreme test of a religious life is to be found in allegiance to the Lordship of Jesus. When we say that what Christ requires is love, let us not forget that love has many phases and qualities, and that he defined the kind of love he desired when he said: "If ye love me, keep my commandments." "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you."—The Watchman.

Some Overtures.

Rev. Dr. L. W. Mudge.

Members of the General Assembly who have served on important committees are not inclined to criticise severely the wording of overtures which are sent down to the Presbyteries. They know the difficult circumstances under which these committees labor. The conflict between the hours of session of the Assembly and the time needed by the committees for the proper consideration of matters committed to their care, the necessity of relegating many matters to small sub-committees, and the haste to present their final reports before the closing hours of the Assembly.

Having had experience of this character the writer desires to call attention to the wording of two of the overtures sent down to the Presbyteries this year, not to find fault, but possibly to secure the desired ends without the expense of prolonged action. The first of these overtures is that on "Ministers from other denominations," in which it is proposed to require an affirmative answer to questions 1 to 8, contained in Section 12 of Chapter XV. of the Form of Government. The eighth question reads, "Are you now willing to take charge of this congregation agreeably to your declaration as accepting their call? And do you promise to discharge the duties of a pastor to them, as God shall give you strength." This is manifestly absurd, under the circumstances proposed, and conditions could be easily named where the propounding of such a question as portion of an examination would be ludicrous. Would it not be best to simply negative this overture and request its resubmission to the Presbyteries with the simple change of questions 1 to 7?

Another overture is that on Constitutional rule No. 3. Briefly this requires that every applicant seeking to be taken under the care of Presbytery as a candidate for the ministry must file his application with the Stated Clerk at least three months before the meeting of Presbytery, and must have been a member of the church by whose session he is recommended at least six months. That this overture is a change in the right direction will be conceded. There are circumstances, however, in which it will work unnecessary hardship, and this hardship, if not apparent injustice, could have been avoided by the addition of a simple clause. Frequently, when students for the ministry attend seminaries at great distances from their homes, in order to save time and expense, they unite with Presbyteries within whose bounds the seminaries are situated. The stated meetings of Presbyteries occur generally during the sessions of the seminaries, and attendance at these meetings at great distances, necessitates absence from important exercises in the seminary, and sometimes a large expenditure of money. According to the provisions of the proposed amendment, students making such changes could not secure aid from the Board of Education, if desired, for over six months. It is true that it is possible to get around the difficulty without violating the word of the proposed amendment, yet its spirit would practically debar some students from needed aid for an entire seminary year, or else entail large and unnecessary expense. Professors in theological seminaries and members of committees on education of Presbyteries within whose bounds large institutions of