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I. LITERARY.

REACHING THE MASSES.

By REV. PEYTON H. HOGE, D. D.

There are some questions that once asked can never cease to be asked until they are answered. There are some demands that once made can never cease to be made until they are satisfied. The question why Presbyterianism has not reached the masses to the same degree as other modes of Christianity is one of these questions, and the demand that it shall do so is one of these demands. Though often suppressed, though often crowded out, the inquiry again and again presents itself with a persistency that refuses to be put aside, and an emphasis that refuses to be ignored.

When we consider the *start* that Presbyterianism had in this country—the advantages in the prestige of past achievement, and in the superior learning of its ministers and influence of its members, it is evident that *something* is wrong when we find that it only ranks third among the denominations of our country, and that the two which lead it were practically not in the race—one of them not even in existence—when it took the field.

The old theory with which we used to console ourselves, that it was our mission to be a regulative, conservative power among the denominations of the country, has been ruled out. Almost any programme of a Presbyterian convention contains something about "Presbyterianism and the Masses." We have recognized the demand that a church shall reach the masses to be a legitimate one. We have admitted that the reaching of the masses is the very purpose for which the church was instituted. We have granted that a church must vindicate its very

OUR OPPORTUNITY AND NEED IN VIRGINIA.

By Rev. J. W. ROSEBRO, D. D.

“Why has the Presbyterian church not kept pace with some of the other denominations?” This question has been discussed with much earnestness and ability in the last few years. Various answers have been given.

1. It has been said that our ministry is educated away from the people, that our preaching is not suited to the need of the people and our preachers are not in sympathetic touch with the people. That cannot be a sufficient explanation, when we see many of our most thoroughly trained men the best fitted to reach all classes; and when we find in any city or community that Presbyterian pastors are not behind the first in popular power and influence.

2. It has been asserted that our ministry are lacking in consecration. Especially has it been urged recently that young men, going out from our Seminaries, are not willing to endure hardness as good soldiers; that they do not show the zeal of the Methodist circuit riders; that they are unwilling to go off from the railroads and into the mountainous and destitute parts. There may be some truth in this charge, but surely that which must constitute the prime factor in every minister's usefulness, is not so lacking among our pastors as to account for our lack of progress. Woe be to the Presbyterian church, if her pastors are thus destitute of the spirit of Christ!

3. It has been charged that our government is not so well suited for aggressive work. “The Methodist church never has any vacant charges,” but with its Episcopal power can at once fill its vacancies and man its pioneer work.

If, however, we establish the Scriptural authority for Presbyterian government, we have proved that Presbyterianism is the *best adapted* of any for aggressive pioneer work, as well as for that in well-established fields. Is there any more Episcopal authority in the hands of a Methodist bishop, than the Scriptures and the Book of Government put in the hands of the Presbyteries? If the Presbyteries fail to exercise the authority Christ has committed to them, let *them* be blamed, not the government of the church. The Apostolic Church under the same government we now have, did not find itself hampered, but in a few decades had carried the Gospel throughout the known world.

4. It has been asserted that we are clogged and hampered by our Calvinistic Doctrines. "The Presbyterian church must always expect to be unpopular as long as she faithfully preaches doctrines repugnant to the natural heart."

Peter reached the hearts of 3,000 men and women by a *Calvinistic* sermon: "Him being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken with wicked hands."

Paul did not find the word of non-effect when he preached such Calvinism as, "He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world," and, "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children."

Who are the men that have been blessed of God in leading the great revivalistic work of the church? They are with few exceptions such Calvinists as Moody, Whitefield, Edwards, Tennant, Knox, Luther. Who are the preachers today who are holding the largest audiences in the great cities of the world? Such Calvinists as Spurgeon, Parker, McNeil, McLaren, Hall, in England, and in our own land such as Broadus, Cuyler, Talmadge, John Hall, Hoge, Palmer.

Who are the men that have written the most glorious page in the church's history, the bloody page on which the martyrs wrote their testimony in their blood? They were of the same faith, though some dwelt in the mountain fastnesses of Switzerland, some in the fertile plains of France, some in the meadows and on the dykes of Holland, some in the green fields of England and some in the glens of Scotland. These are the doctrines that have made the church every where the champion of liberty and have made the world its debtor.

Strike from the history of the world the names and deeds of the men of Calvinistic faith and you have taken away what is best and most heroic.

Surely the explanation of the comparatively slow growth of the Presbyterian church, is not to be found in the system of doctrines which makes her creed; for we see that under that creed the church of God has gathered its largest host.

None of the reasons assigned, nor all of them combined, furnish a satisfactory explanation.

May not the chief reason be found in the lack in past years of aggressive evangelistic work? We have lost much material, not only by the lack of Presbyterian evangelistic work, but also by the lack of it in our churches. How often have we seen this to be the case. A faithful and laborious pastor, with a

number of preaching places, to which he could perhaps only preach once each month, patiently sows the seed in earnest Scriptural preaching, then when there are indications of the harvest, a zealous Methodist minister would come into the neighborhood, "hold a meeting" and gather in all the harvest, except a few gleanings from those families where the training held the children fast. Another reaped where he had sown. Why? Was it not simply because he did not reap himself? So in towns and cities the young people, and people with no special church ties, make a profession of religion in some "revival services" and join the church where they made their profession, simply because such services were rarely held in the Presbyterian church. We have been willing to accept the blessing of a revival when we were sure it came down from God, but have we not been so afraid of "getting up a revival" that we have not followed the laws of spiritual need and life?

There seems to be in spiritual life a need for *special services every year in every church*. It gives time for reflection. It makes us face our need of deeper spirituality and consecration. It makes the people wait with one accord in one place to pray for and "wait for the promise of the Father." "When Zion travailed she brought forth her children." God met this need in Israel by the great annual feasts when the people went up to Jerusalem to spend days in solemn worship, and with joy they drew water from the wells of salvation. Our Episcopal brethren minister to this need by the services of Lent; our Methodist and Baptist brethren by the special revival services they hold annually. If we made the use we ought of the safer and equally earnest methods of our church, there would assuredly be "added to the church of the saved" in largely increased numbers.

Thus would we protect our people also from the wild methods of self-appointed travelling evangelists (?), whose work is often a curse to the community visited by them. Many of them have gifts that attract the people. They take away much money; they leave behind them much evil. From "Sam Jones," down to the smallest diamond edition of him, they are doing harm to the cause of Christ. How incomparably better for the churches are such services as the Richmond churches are now holding. Souls are converted, Christians are built up, the churches are drawn together in unity. Strange that such services are so rare in our city churches.

What church is better fitted than the Presbyterian for a work

that is both aggressive and safe? Church statistics show that our people give more to all causes than any other. The people are ready to furnish the sinews of war when they are instructed and interested. It is also freely admitted that our people are better trained in the knowledge of the Scriptures and their standards. That the family life, the family training is more systematically looked after, that the church is manned with a thoroughly trained ministry, are accepted as distinctive traits of the Presbyterian church.

Our church government is another strong point. It ought to be the most popular, for it is republican. If it were presented to the people as it might be, and if other forms were administered consistently with their theories, there would be a popular uprising in favor of that form to which the world is turning more and more as "Liberty enlightens the world," a "government of the people, by the people and for the people."

Yet thoroughly furnished as we are, we have not accomplished what we ought. Our people are gradually realizing this. There is a growing dissatisfaction with the results of our work. They do not want the church changed. They do not want to give up our distinctive doctrines, nor change our government. The engine is complete, the machinery is the best, but we need the *fire* to carry the church forward, and make it the blessing to mankind God designed it to be. We may be the "balance wheel," the "great conservative power in the church," but we ought to be more than that. We ought to lead the sacramental host. Yet the fact remains, we are not reaching the people as we ought. In pioneer work we have not been as aggressive as some others. We have been distanced in many parts of the country work. It will hardly fail to be the case that if two pastors be settled in the same town, one of them a Presbyterian, and they have equal ability and opportunities, that in ten years the Presbyterian will build the stronger church. Why should we not be able to reach the people in other circumstances? If you want to get the masses, go after them, Mr. Moody said. If we go after the people, we shall get the people.

The object of this movement in the Synod of Virginia is to reach the people and bring increasing numbers under the shaping influence of Presbyterianism.

Two facts confront us in Virginia—one is seen in "the Southside," and the other in "the Southwest" and in "The Valley."

1. The Southside felt the desolating tread of war most se-

verely and has rallied least. How many happy and beautiful homes were demolished! There stand the blackened chimneys still to show where a beautiful home-life was sheltered, and to tell of poverty too great to allow rebuilding. A high-spirited and chivalric people dwelt in the land; war and poverty made the struggle for life a hard one.

In this section most of the churches are weak and many almost ready to despair. They are constantly drained of their most vigorous life. The young men go away where opportunities are greater. The membership is largely of those who cannot get away, of old men and women. There is little prospect of their becoming strong and self-supporting.

In Cumberland and Buckingham counties, where in better days four ministers were supported, we have not now a single pastor. It is scarcely better in other counties. What shall we do with these feeble churches? Shall we tire of helping and leave them to despair and dissolution? To state that possibility at once arouses the determination to help them bear their burden. A few generations ago, there was in the county of Powhatan only one Presbyterian family. Charming daughters graced that home. It naturally became a stopping place for young preachers and elders. The daughters were led out from that home "according to God's holy ordinance," and from that family sprang many now honored and loved. It is said that about forty ministers and minister's wives have descended from that sturdy stock. What if that family had been given up by us and lost to the Presbyterian church? Then would have been lost one who is now your honored and venerable professor. Then would have been lost the Lacys, the Whareys, the Brooks, the Hawes and the Hoges.

I have been told that one church in Richmond has received about forty members from Powhatan county. Could we better see the importance of holding up the weak hands in these feeble churches? The life that flows from them flows into the city churches and often is its most vigorous life. It is only a question of time when we shall lose our hold in the cities if we abandon the country.

The reason that now in most of the large cities in Virginia the Methodists outnumber the other denominations, is to be found in their patient work in the country in the past generation. The reason they now have so many men of large wealth is that they did not neglect the poor. The poor of one generation are the rich of the next.

There are some points of promise in "Southside," such as Newport News, the work in the suburbs of Norfolk, and in the new churches of Richmond. Some promising churches have been organized under the faithful and judicious labors of Dr. W. A. Campbell. Still it is true that most of the churches are weak and have little hope of becoming self-sustaining. What can we do for them but give such help as shall enable them to retain the services of their self-denying pastors, whose abundant labors place them beside any men in any church. They endure hardness as good soldiers and are worthy of all honor.

We must also have active evangelists to look after these weak churches, and strengthen the things that are ready to die. We must not abandon the "Southside."

2. Southwest Virginia and The Valley. Here is a section of the state richly blessed by Providence. Its valleys are fertile, its mountain sides carpeted with grass, on its hills thousands of cattle feed, while its ridges hide rich treasures of mineral wealth. The picture given by Moses, in the 8th chapter of Deuteronomy, of the land God gave to Israel, aptly describes this highly favored section of our old Commonwealth. "For the Lord, thy God, bringeth thee into a good land, a land of brooks of waters, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills; a land of wheat and barley and vines * * * and honey; a land wherein thou shalt eat bread without scarceness, thou shalt not lack anything in it; a land whose stones are iron and out of whose hills thou mayest dig brass. * * * Thou shalt bless the Lord, thy God, for the good land which He hath given thee." This land, already filled with a fine population and prospering, is now rapidly developing. Railroads are penetrating it in all directions. New towns are springing up almost in a day. New people are pouring in. Much of this immigration is the best we could have. It is not foreign, atheistic, communistic, Sabbath desecrating, un-American, but comes from different parts of our own country. It is material ready to our hand. True it comes seeking gain and in the rush for wealth, God is often forgotten, but what a field for earnest and aggressive work!

Much of this apparent progress may be an empty "boom," but certainly much of it is permanent. Capitalists who have invested their thousands and millions there are not inclined to let it come to nought. That whole country will in the course of the next few years be filled with a large population and flourishing cities and towns will line its railways.

The financial depression of the past winter has retarded this development, yet has turned the attention of capitalists more than ever southward, because of the steadiness with which Southern investments stood the shock of financial stringency. The money has not stopped coming nor have the people stopped coming. Surely we cannot afford as a church to lose this golden opportunity. To lose it now, is to fall years behind; is to be so outstripped that we can never regain the lost ground. No! Every loyal son of the church must come up to the help of the Lord against the mighty. The old blue flag we love must be planted in the breezes that blow along our coast, must be unfurled on every mountain top, and must wave in every county.

Kentucky has led the way in this synodical movement. Under the impulse given nine years since by the generous offer of two loyal sons, she won the honor of being the pioneer in this work. The story of the successful work of those nine years is a thrilling one. Read the eloquence of these figures as the result of eight years work, over \$90,000 has been expended in the Kentucky Synod; "fifty-nine new churches organized, half as many more resuscitated; 9,505 members received on confession of faith, the number of candidates increased from five to thirty-six, and the Presbyterian banner planted in sixteen counties." These results have stimulated the Synod to still wider evangelistic enterprise. This spirit has infected other Synods. North Carolina has wheeled into line. The Synods of Alabama, Nashville, Missouri, Tennessee are pushing the same word. South Carolina, too, will no doubt finish discussing the constitutional questions involved and will get to work by another year.

No question is awakening a deeper interest in the Synod of Virginia now. Generous sons have given liberally to inaugurate the movement. The people are willing to do all they can to ensure success, and we hope to see the whole Synod enthused with the movement.

All this means that the Presbyterian church is rising to her opportunities and seeking to make her increase in numbers worthy of her power, worthy of her ministry and worthy of her history.

This aggressive work shows our great need of men. If there were 500 young men ready to preach now, we could give them work in the Southern Church. The increase in ministers now hardly more than keeps pace with the loss by death. How

loud the call of this work to our sons! "The field is white to the harvest." When we see every profession crowded and the ranks of the ministry so thin, must we not ask ourselves is there not a lack of consecration on the part of Christian parents?

I am glad, my young brethren, to have the privilege of laying before you the opportunity and needs of this great work. If God has called you to the foreign field, I would not have you disobedient to the heavenly voice. God has honored this Seminary in calling many of her sons to go into distant lands and tell the story of His love to a lost world, and I would not, if I could, turn one of you from the Macedonian cry of the nations sitting in darkness, if that cry is piercing your heart. I only wish to lay before you the need here.

" You can find the heathen nearer,
You can help them at your door."

One letter tells us there are hundreds of souls along the line of one of the great railways, who have no preaching whatever.

I have sometimes thought the claims of the foreign field have been unduly pressed when brethren with glowing words have presented the pitiable picture of the heathen world and while all hearts were deeply stirred, have secured pledges to dedicate their life to that work; pledges taken sometimes from those whose judgment was not mature enough to decide so important a question. Whether this opinion be correct or not, I do not stop to argue, but this I know that the call for earnest, consecrated men in the home field has never been so urgent. Virginia needs every man here, North Carolina needs every man here, and so does every Synod in the South. I lay before you this fact and let it speak to your heart.

I ask you to think of the magnitude of the work to be done in our own land; of the foreign population pouring in like an immense stream, much of it as heathen as Japan; of the vacant fields asking in vain for pastors; of the dangers which beset our Christian life from Sabbath desecration, worldliness, covetousness and rationalism; of the need of vigorous life in the Home Field, if we would maintain our foreign work. Then will you have before you a call that is *second to no other* and one that must appeal to your hearts.