

11/10/1911
Address of J. H. ANDERSON, Knoxville,
Tenn., Chairman of the Executive
Committee of the

Laymen's
Missionary Movement
of the
Southern Baptist
Convention



1911
This address was delivered before the South-
ern Baptist Convention at Hot Springs
and requested for publication
by unanimous vote

Attending the Southern Baptist Convention for the first time—twenty years ago—in this same city, the first real world-wide vision and conviction of Kingdom matters came to me. During the intervening years that vision has widened. With each succeeding Convention attended, that conviction has been deepened by the very atmosphere created by the presence of this, the greatest body of Christians that assembles on the face of the earth. It is a peculiar joy and pleasure to come back once more to “the place where I first saw the light.”

I have been asked to say a few words on the report of the Laymen’s Missionary Movement, read by Prof. J. T. Henderson on May 15th. Those of you who heard the report will recall that there were recommended to this Convention the adoption of three separate tasks for the year before us.

1st.—The “Carrying-on” of the “Emergency Pledge Band” among laymen.

2nd.—The vigorous stressing of the obligation of Stewardship among laymen, emphasizing a tenth as the minimum.

3rd.—The holding of conventions in each state of the Southern Baptist territory during the year by the laymen for education and inspiration.

FIRST—EMERGENCY CARD PLAN

Most of you are familiar with the fact that the Laymen’s Missionary Movement suggested this “Emergency Band,” and it was most heartily commended by the Southern Baptist Convention at Houston, Texas, in 1915. Other matters seemed to set it aside for a time, but during the past year about 2,500 names have been secured, and upon first call, \$8,500 has, up to this time, been sent in; \$6,000 of this amount went to pay for the Boys’ Academy at Fukuoka, Japan, and \$2,500 for Camp work among our soldiers.

The plan has amply justified itself, although it has scarcely touched its possibilities. Suppose we had 100,000 men in this noble Band, each ready upon call to send in his \$5.00 to meet an emergency. What a volume it would make, and no one would feel it? This can be accomplished if we can get one interested live layman in each church to work it up.

Experience has proven that the talk and agitation in any church of the “Emergency Plan” enlarges the giving through other channels. It fre-

quently is the starting point with men who previously have not given to Missionary causes. All of us are largely creatures of habit, and the most important element in the formation of any habit is the starting. We confidently claim that when a man signs one of these "Emergency Pledge Cards," he is started in a habit that will grow.

Sometimes I think that we merchants realize more than any other class of people, the psychology of doing a thing for the first time. Even in as small a matter as crossing a threshold, it is much easier the second time. And so, merchants realizing this, sometimes advertise an article for much less than cost in order to induce those who have never entered their stores to start the habit. This Emergency Pledge Card is a splendid "starter."

SECOND—THE OBLIGATION OF STEWARDSHIP

The Laymen's Missionary Movement has stood for this all the years of its existence. No other organization has done so much foundation work on Stewardship. Those great addresses of our Secretary on "The Layman Four Square," and "Stewardship," have been delivered hundreds of times all over our Southern Baptist territory. The hard, laborious work of laying the foundation has been done, and we think that the time is ready for the structure to go ahead vigorously.

A tenth has been the central thought of these great addresses of our Secretary. (If any Pastor or Church is having trouble with their finances, send for Prof. J. T. Henderson, and get him to deliver one of these addresses.)

There has been so much written and spoken on the subject of tithing that it would be presumptuous for me to attempt to add another word; but individual experiences are always somewhat different, and if you will pardon me, I want to briefly tell of two such experiences with which I am more or less familiar, and then you will have my reasons for strongly urging the adoption of this part of the report.

Upon entering business, a young man bought a stock of merchandise on credit. From that moment he was in mortal terror for fear that he would never be able to pay for it. To such an extent did this fear possess him that not a penny that came into his hands was spent, that could possibly be avoided,

but was applied on his debt. It was save—save—save—economy to the point of denying himself almost the necessaries of life. Thus the first few years of his business life were carried on, until it dawned upon him that the “saving habit” had a “strangle-hold” upon him that was crushing in its power, and shriveling up his very heart. Remember, he had no miserly instinct that had brought him to this position, but a legitimate and honorable motive—that of paying just debts. In this condition he floundered for a few years, giving a little grudgingly when there was no way to escape. All the time, the fact that there were always debts to be paid, quieted a guilty conscience. Finally, under the wise leadership of a good Pastor, and a tremendous struggle, the tithing plan was adopted. Then it was easy to give cheerfully, and claim the promise of God’s love; and never since that good hour has the Lord’s part of the profits of his business been exhausted, but like the widow’s cruse of oil, it renews itself, and it seems that the more that is taken out, the more is placed back.

Do you wonder that such an experience should make one an enthusiast about tithing? And do you wonder that a shudder runs over him every time he thinks of what might have become of him had the tithing plan not been adopted early in his business life? We are perfectly willing for the theologs to fight it out as to whether or not the New Testament commands tithing, but all the preachers in this Convention could not convince me that it isn’t a good rule of life—good for business, and good for religion.

ANOTHER EXPERIENCE

A young man in our employ on a moderate salary came to me in much distress as to his finances. He said, “You are continually talking to us boys about the importance of saving and being thrifty—you tell us a boy who does not save a little out of his salary will never be a success—that you lose interest in him, when you find that he is spending all he makes, and then you urge us to give to missions, Red Cross, Army Y. M. C. A., and church expenses.” Continuing, he said, “I cannot save, save, save, and give, give, give, both at the same time. The two habits are diametrically opposed to each other.” Humanly speaking, he was right; and it was with just such conflicts in mind, no doubt, the all-wise

Father laid down the principle of the tenth as the solution of all such problems that are beating and throbbing in the hearts of honest inquiring souls. I told him to set aside a tenth for the Lord, and then to save to the point of denying himself till it hurts, and that I would guarantee his success in the business world, and far more important—success in his spiritual life. He adopted the suggestion and has enjoyed both material and spiritual prosperity.

There never was such an opportune time to stress Stewardship as the present—the time is ripe for it. The numerous calls that have been made for our soldiers by the Red Cross, and Army Y. M. C. A., and such things have gotten men in the habit of giving who have never been reached before. Those of us who have done any soliciting during these past months, have abundant proof of this fact. God is using this war to reach the pocketbooks of many men who have never before felt the joy of giving. Especially is this true with regard to many rich men. Now is the time for you Pastors to thunder it out to your rich men, that the final test of a man's character is his attitude toward his money. Don't be afraid to hurt his feelings—his skin is thick, besides, he knows that you are right and will honor you for it. The greatest dead-weight the Kingdom of God carries today is the stingy rich man. If we can get these fellows to see their duty and committed to a tenth as a starter, they are fixed for all time. You don't have to waste time and energy on them every time a campaign is put on for missions, new building funds, or church expenses.

THIRD—HOLDING CONVENTIONS AMONG LAYMEN IN EACH STATE FOR EDUCA- TION AND INSPIRATION

Lack of interest among laymen is due almost entirely to lack of knowledge of Kingdom affairs. Information is needed, and in no other way can this be given out so effectively as in conventions.

Business men in their offices have their minds so full of the worries and perplexities of the every day grind that it is almost impossible to hold their attention long enough to tell them anything out-side of business matters, and make it stick. Assembled in conventions, business cares have been dismissed, their minds are free and open, and their hearts are more easily touched.

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There is a freedom of speech and action in a laymen's convention that does not exist in any other religious gathering. This is due, doubtless, to the fact that laymen are not embarrassed by the presence of a houseful of big preachers, to get upon their feet and speak out of their hearts, and when a man has spoken his convictions—even though he may have held and practiced them all his life, the very articulate word in the presence of his fellows will deepen his conviction, and spur him on to do larger things. You preachers know that better than any one else, and you practice it upon us poor unsuspecting laymen to the queen's taste. We are willing to be fooled, and even humiliated by making fools of ourselves by trying to talk on our feet, if it will make us better men; but we are sometimes deeply concerned about whether or not our pastors and preacher friends will ever get forgiveness for the stories they tell us, such as, "That was a great speech you made," and "That talk of yours will do more good than a dozen sermons," etc.

Another helpful influence of these conventions is the exchange of experiences that we hear. After all, the most interesting thing in the world is human experience. What grips one more than the autobiography of a great man? These conventions are made up largely of personal experiences, and consequently are intensely interesting, and wonderfully inspirational.

If the convention adopts this report, I trust the pastors and laymen of the different states will lend every help to our Secretary in getting up these conventions.

These, then, are the tasks we have set for ourselves for the coming year:

FIRST—The "Carrying-on" of the Emergency Pledge Band among laymen.

SECOND—The Obligation of Stewardship, with a tenth as the minimum.

THIRD—Holding conventions among laymen in each state for education and inspiration.

Our noble Secretary, even though he is as strong as an ox, cannot do all this alone. He must have the hearty co-operation of the pastors and churches.

God grant that he may not only have your co-operation, but your earnest prayers as well.

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