

Original Contributions.

The Rich Man in the Congregation.

BY MATHATHAS.

(Continued.)

Dear pastor: yours of recent date received and contents duly noted. I must express myself as somewhat surprised at your novel way of asking me to "preach the Gospel." I have read your letter, and conclude that you must certainly mean this as a joke!

I duly appreciate your kindness in showing what you consider the peculiar advantages of this plan. One would conclude from your reasoning, that rich men, all over the country, would not only become richer by this project, but that it would consecrate their money to such a holy use that God would give them everlasting peace as their reward. You will permit me to say, however, that I must differ from you, widely as the poles, in this matter, as to my sending out a Gospel Agent!

You are aware that I am greatly counted on to sustain our preacher in the village. As you say we have been without regular preaching a long time. Of course Bro. F— speaks for us in the absence of regular preaching, but his farm cares keep his mind thoroughly taken, and the public idea seems to have outgrown the talks he gives us from Sunday to Sunday.

Since Mr. M— came, now about three months, I have been called upon to donate largely to the work at home. I subscribed eight dollars per quarter, but think I will be obliged to give ten in order that he may get his pay.

I cannot see why you should put me down as a "rich man," though I do feel a pardonable pride in being addressed by you, and have you write that "to no one else have I mentioned this," placing it thus on me to set the ball rolling—confering great honor I suppose.

You certainly over estimate my wealth very greatly. I cannot be said to have in real, and personal property more than two hundred and fifty thousand, and you must know in this day, that such a sum scarcely cuts a figure in the money markets. Your figures are not far wrong however when you calculate that my income is at least fifteen thousand dollars; I take pride in saying that I have made my money myself, and know how to turn it

over to pay. I have made a careful estimate since receiving your letter, and I consider my prospects good for at least fifteen thousand a year. That you know is a mere trifle. If I had the wealth of some men, nothing could prevent me taking immediate steps to further the cause of my Master which I love with all my heart.

On looking over my books, I find that my yearly contributions to the church in every way, amounts to a trifle over one hundred dollars. Your plan was, that I should sustain a good young man at my own expense, in some destitute field, at say, a yearly outlay of one thousand dollars, and pay what he sent me from the field into the treasury of the Missionary Board. This you argued would not make my whole yearly outlay more than twelve hundred dollars and less than "one-tenth" my income. I see you have reckoned shrewdly, but it must be evident to you that I cannot afford so much of an expenditure at the present time.

You know that it takes money to live in the town of K—. My family which is moderately large, make many demands upon me which I must supply. My boy must be educated and my daughter must be allowed some few privileges granted to other young ladies.

Then you know, I came before the primaries for nomination in my district, and was elected some time since, to the State Legislature. You may not know it, but I will inform you, the time has come in State elections, when more or less money is demanded of the candidate. Taking it altogether I have been at greater expense, probably, than the position will be worth, but there is the necessary fight during the campaign, and in our land of various shades and colors of belief and opinions, I was compelled to condescend more or less to my constituency. You are well aware that I could not be elected by the vote of the church, so was forced to use some measures, my dear old pastor, that you might not consider quite correct with your peculiar views. You know me to be a liberal man, and as such, addressed me in good faith, but you can surely see that such a measure would not be consistent with my place in the halls of legislature. Of course it would not be greatly damaging to me, only in the event of reelection!

I heartily concur with you in the hope that this may be carried out by very many in the near fu-

ture.

I could suggest the names of Bros. M—, of S—, and L—, of F—, who, it seems to me could easily send out each an Evangelist.

Your idea of banding brethren of each church together in aid societies, to spread the Gospel I like. You can count on my giving liberally to forward such a movement.

But you certainly cannot be ignorant of the fact that should you openly call upon the brethren for such donations that you will be unmercifully criticized! Why our State abounds in well to-do men, deacons and elders in the churches, who will demand of you Scripture authority for such a scheme as this you are proposing.

While I do not seriously object to the plan in general, yet I can see many drawbacks to such a movement. You would in the first place encourage young men to educate themselves for the purpose of making their living by preaching alone!

Surely this is not Apostolic. Too many young men would crowd our schools in the hope of gain. The ministry would be degraded to a money making scheme, and the power of the Gospel would be lost. No, sir, it was never intended that preachers should have property and make fine incomes from their

preaching! But I have run over your pointed question to me, viz: "What are you doing to carry out the Savior's great commission, 'Go preach the Gospel?'" I am giving one hundred dollars a year here at home, but really I feel sometimes that that is too much; not but that I will gladly give that much, and even more, to preach the good news of the kingdom, but when I go to church and see how cold and indifferent the brethren are; see Sunday after Sunday the same small audiences out morning and evening. I think its most a waste of money to hire preachers. The people do not appreciate preaching any more. We have a good preacher; we are paying him eight hundred dollars a year, and I let him have the brown cottage for eighteen dollars per month, two dollars cheaper than it rented last year, but he seems so worried with his family cares, that sometimes I think he is not prepared to preach.

But truly I had not intended writing so much. I close by wishing your novel, but I think, feasible plan, much success.

I am yours truly and fraternally,
Hon. A. B. L—, of K—.

And thus the "Rich Man." reas-

oned, while the pastor's fantastic aircastle faded out. We suppose, that should a thousand letters be written to a thousand rich men, no two would answer in the same language, but why any should answer as did the Hon. L—, is something mysterious. There can be no doubt but that he wished the cause well; he certainly offered no argument to show that *one tenth* of his, or any one's income is too much to give to the Lord; he did not adduce a single Scripture condemning the action of a brother or sister, should they send out preachers at their own charges. One strong argument was "It is novel!" There is not so much good proof for that as might be supposed, for the pastor had gathered from history that such a work was not wholly unknown. There can be but little objection to communities of Christians banding together to preach the Gospel, and that being true, no one could object to having an Evangelist sent out even by one individual. But why should the pastor thus give up his cherished scheme? Alas! it never has occurred to the rich men, men who have been wonderfully prospered in the midst of Christian civilization, that they in any way, have greater ability to preach the Gospel than the poor young man who has been impelled by the whitening harvest, to go into the field, trusting the future for his uncertain stipend.

Thus the pastor reasoned: "Why should I, with but ordinary talents, and suffering almost daily from an infirmity of the flesh, use every available means to fit myself for preaching, while around me on every side, are those with God given abilities (See Acts 11: 29) who will not aid me in this struggle to tell, in an acceptable manner these 'Wonderful Words of Life?'" To the young man who fits himself for the ministry, the living is uncertain. Of course I know it is the same in law, medicine, and almost every branch of labor, in which we engage. But in law or medicine there is some prescribed fee bill, and what is better, a chance to rise, by industry, to command a competence. The daily and hourly struggle of the preacher to make himself master of language, a mover and director of those under his care, for their future happiness, brings no positive remuneration. I know I will be seriously charged with sordid motives in this matter, and on me will be poured severe criticism, but why? Is it not about