

Return to M.H.B.

Parsonage,  
First Presbyterian Church,  
Nyack, N. Y.

May 1st. 1891.

My Dear Belden; --

As usual I have delayed writing, in reply to yours of early in April; but with good reason. Absence of ecclesiastical and other duties, special work at home, that was very urgent, had much to do with delay; but most of all was my inability to answer your inquiries.

I have at leisure moments thought of a change in program, but thus far can think of nothing better. There is no need to wait longer to reply. The geographical program or topical will depend on men and material. Either will work well, if men and papers be present; neither will, if men to discuss be wanting. It seems impossible to make out a complete program. The best that can be done is to make out a provisional one, on either line; and, as far as possible, follow that; yet make it so elastic that papers can be inserted or transferred.

Each — topical and geographical — has its advantages. I see little preference. There is more reason to expect to cover the ground if the geographical be chosen; but it will be thinly covered. I was well satisfied with your arrangement last year, and shall endorse it this, if you follow the same order. The fact is, I have far more faith in you, and others with you, than in my own judgement. Because of that faith, I give myself little anxiety about affairs before the meeting. Doubtless this is not the best thing, yet what else can I do? I know you have more time, as well as more ability that way; so leave it with you; while I am ready to do what I can. Unfortunately that is little. Indeed, it seems unwise that I be retained chairman of ex. com.; for the reasons of lack of ability for the work and time to give to it. That is frank; but fair.

Now as to Wednesday afternoon, why not have some special subjects presented, papers read, or discussions presented? For example; let there be a discussion on the subject, Is there anything helpful in heathen theology for gospel truth? Is it wise for the missionary to adopt native customs? If so how far? What relative strength should be given to evangelistic and educational work? That may be misleading; its meaning is, should educational methods have as much time men money as evangelistic?

Another suggestion may not be amiss. Let there be a half hour left each afternoon, as well as morning, for presenting papers discussions or questions. If the subject



be so interesting that is discussed before the half hour, that it requires the added thirty minutes, use them for it.

I agree with the sentiment that it will be well to devote more time to devotional services; gathering power from the Storage Battery. While discussions will not be lessened, as far as practical importance is concerned, they will reach desired results the sooner, and no time will be lost. Bene orasse, bene studisse, you know. The best parts of former meetings to me have been the prayer meetings and farewell services, because we were brought nearer to each other and to the Throne. By all means let us have more time devoted to prayer for the Spirit. How would it do to have two prayer meetings a day, beginning the morning and afternoon sessions; and at least one of the two be devoted to special missions. Say Thursday for Africa, Friday China, Saturday India, Sunday general of course and as before, Monday Japan, Tuesday Islands. I merely suggest alphabetically. It seems to me that we might spend half an hour, if not an hour, each afternoon praying for special fields or special work. Perhaps it will be better to make, if we do this at all, the meetings for prayer topical; say one for medical, another educational, still another evangelical, another for native helpers, still another for literature. Then addresses, short and practical, might come in; doubtless would, to inspire in the work and instruct as well. I realize the fact that it is difficult to confine thought and prayer to a certain topic; and would not try to do that. Instead, would merely suggest such as leading topics, but by no means exclusive.

I doubt if we can change the evening popular meeting to advantage. We might, instead of making it geographical, make it topical, if there be a change advisable at all.

A word about Father Endeavor Clark; while I do not agree entirely with you all, I am like the woman who died ~~her~~ husband was asked if she was resigned; "Why she had to be", was his reply; so with myself. Nor have I any feeling about it. I hold my opinion in obedience to that of the majority, but hold my opinion nevertheless. However, a day or two after yours was received, Dr. Clark wrote that, owing to the state of his health, he could not be with us in all probability; so I replied that we would not expect him. It is doubtless as well; but my hope was to bring missionary workers into contact with the C. I. movement that each may catch the impulse of the other. I think the time has come, in many mission fields, when the C. I. movement will help in the work. And, by bringing Dr. C. before the missionaries that they might catechise him, I believed they would be helped greatly in the work.



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Now as to preacher. The best Reformed man in America is Fagg, just returned on wife's account from China. He is young but masterly. His return, and it is likely to be permanent, is a severe blow to the Amoy mission. Amerman, late Prof. in Tokyo, may be present, but the General Synod meeting during the early part of I. M. U., may prevent. That hinders other Reformed church men. I saw Dr. E. C. Scudder, and urged him to come. But his church at Asbury Park entertains the ~~General Synod~~; so he cannot be present. I do not think there is a strong man of the Reformed church, aside from those mentioned, likely to be present. I am not sure about Presbyterian. Dr. G. W. Knox, Prof. of Theo. Sem. in Tokyo, now in America, may be with us. He is able scholarly and masterly in certain lines; I doubt if he be a good preacher. He gave a learned address before our Soc. of Comparative religions a few weeks ago, and is to address a club of which I am a member Sat. If Dr. James S. Lennis could be persuaded to be present, he might ~~suited good~~ preacher. I am not certain, however. Bishop Thoburn arrived Sat. week ago, and will stay a few weeks or months. He might ~~prove~~ a good preacher, though is not an impressive speaker. Dr. Gracey will know more about him. If possible to get a Baptist, it will be well; yet we should not confine ourselves to the matter of courtesy, when we can get strong men. I have often felt grateful to Dr. Gracey for bringing Dr. Douglas to us last year. Unfortunately, I am not posted as to men in this country. My time has been so taken that I have hardly taken time to read magazines and papers. Hope after this to have more leisure. Have less engagements ahead, so look for leisure.

I have tried to get new men and women to attend, and have promise of a number. By the way, Rev. Ross Taylor and wife, son of the Bishop of Africa, themselves for a few months foreign missionaries, live in Nyack, and would be glad to attend I. M. U. Shall I invite them? Indeed, I have done so provisionally, and know they would be glad to go. He edits the African News. We have in Nyack now a Damascus teacher, and I think lay preacher, going back soon to Syria. His name is Jipoor, initial A. He seems a most excellent man, is certainly well educated. He was at the World's Fair, connected with some humane work among his stranded countrymen there. He is not an ordained preacher, but missionary teacher, I think. Shall I invite him? He may leave soon, but will be in reach for months, I presume. I hope we will have Rev. L. M. Talmage, son of late Dr. J. V. N. Talmage, late of Amoy. He promised to attend. While not a speaker, he may



prove a worker, and would be an acquisition to executive committee; and a better reformed representative than I am. I hope Dr. Pennick will be present; but have not as much faith in Episcopacy as I have in the perseverance of the saints. When a genuine Calvinist says he means to be there, he goes. The apostolic succession does not seem a success with the I. M. U.

I have not signed and ~~sent~~ filled blank, because it is uncertain about Mrs. Davis going with me to Clifton Springs in June. Her health, far from good, though better here than at Hempstead may prevent. She said, a day or two ago, that, unless she is better, she will not go. It may be that warmer weather will improve her health; but I doubt if she ever recovers. Yet she is around and engaged, as usual, in church work, though must be easy and careful how much she does.

My own health is excellent, except that I find my old foe--insomnia--has discovered my whereabouts.

Does the meeting begin Wednesday afternoon? I supposed it began in the evening. If afternoon, I must try to be on hand earlier.

By the way, what do you think of trying to publish in book form for missionaries proceedings and papers of our I. M. U. meetings? Of course you say EXPENSE. How would it do to try some business man who wishes to advertise; or several of them, and offer to give them a certain number of pages for advertisements on condition that they pay for, say, a thousand copies. They pay and get their money back through advertisements, while missionaries get the advantage of the Union. The books could be sent by express to the various mission rooms, and distributed thence by the Societies to the missions. I am not sure that the matter can be worked, but think it possible; and, if you and the others in advice think well of it, I will see what can be done another year if not this one. It seems to me a feasible plan. Advertisers wish to reach readers; and we the same among missionaries, the one will pay, the other work.

Am glad to know that you are improving in health, and hope you will ere long be ready for pastoral work again.

Pardon my delay in writing. Hoping to hear from before I see you in June, I am heartily yours, with warm regards to all the I. M. U. and friends,

J. A. Davis.