7-11-1874

Isaac Errett, "Help Those Women"

Isaac Errett

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.discipleshistory.org/all_foundationaldocuments
“Help Those Women”

by Isaac Errett

For some years past there has been a growing conviction in our churches of a failure to enlist the sympathies and activities of Christian women in the work of the Church. The inquiry has been anxiously made, a thousand times over, What can women do? What field of usefulness is open to us in which we can work without embarrassment, and without controversy as to the lawfulness and propriety of our movements? In many places they participate in the prayers, readings and exhortations of the social meetings; but in many others the public sentiment shuts them out from this. In the Sunday School they have found genial and profitable employment, but this is almost the only sphere of steady activity that has opened to them. We are of opinion that a more enlightened public sentiment will yet suggest greatly increased facilities in our church for the exercise of the peculiar gifts and graces of the sisterhood, but we must patiently await the growth of this sentiment. Meanwhile, a new and large and most important work for Christ, such as we are sure will meet with unanimous and hearty approval, is rising into view, to which it gives us great pleasure to call the attention of our readers, and especially of our lady readers. We write this in Iowa City, in the home of S. E. Pearre, our preacher at this important point. His wife, Sister C. N. Pearre—well known in several States to our Churches as a lady of liberal culture, of earnest religious convictions, and of unusual capacity to plan and manage practical schemes of usefulness—has been quietly arranging for months past, a method of enlisting the sympathies and energies of Christian women in missionary work. It has been already so far successful that she is willing, although shrinking from publicity, to let the facts be made known through the press. Her plan is a very simple one, and may, we think, be made altogether effective. It is, in brief, to have the sisters in every congregation, under the best leadership their numbers can furnish, unite to raise money for missions, and between this and next October effect such an organization and raise such means as will make it desirable to send a delegate to Cincinnati at the time of the next General Convention, with a view to effect a general organization, to operate in harmony with the Executive Committee of the General Convention in mission work. Already she has received favorable responses from a number of churches in six states—responses that indicate a hearty enthusiasm on the part of the sisters, a real delight in the prospect of a practicable work worthy to enlist their thoughts, their prayers and their labors. To give a more definite idea of the plan, let us mention its workings here in Iowa City.
[1.] The ladies of this church have organized for missionary work under the guidance of Sister Pearre. They endeavor to enlist every sister in the church in regular contributions, however small, thus to make it a common work, and foster a personal interest on the part of all in the salvation of the perishing.

[2.] They meet once a month—in the afternoon of the first Lord’s day in the month, for prayer and conference. It is felt to be very important to cultivate a spirit of prayer and to develop this work as a work of faith and a labor of love, in which the God-fearing, Christ-loving spirit cultivated is relied on as the sure basis of success. They felt that “unless the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain;” and they desire to initiate the work in every church in this spirit of dependence on God and with anxiety to make it a means of healthy and vigorous spiritual culture. Information on mission work is laid before them—what is being done by women in missions, and especially in foreign missions, and the encouragement to labor furnished in the facts from mission fields. These meetings are marked here by great earnestness and deep religious feeling; and the greatest of all the anxieties of those engaged in it is, that their work shall not assume a mere business air, but be made tributary to the highest ends of spiritual life.

[3.] They propose at present as a rallying point in their incipient effort, the resuscitation of the Jamaica Mission. The work having already been begun there, and the churches already established, furnishing a basis for immediate operations in which the fruits of missionary labor may be speedily gathered, it is thought that as the best known and most available point for the first feeble efforts, and as discharging a debt which we owe to a mission of our own creation, it is wisest to begin with this. When the Convention meets in October, and the subject is fully canvassed, other fields may come into view, and labor in other directions may be undertaken. It is not proposed to limit operations to foreign missions, yet it is felt that the greatest need is in this direction, and that the development of a genuine missionary spirit will be most successfully accomplished by work in some of the foreign fields which are opening so wonderfully and from which cries of help are sounding in our ears with ever increasing intensity.

[4.] While the details of working will be left, in each church, to the wisdom of its own membership, it is hoped that money will be raised without resort to festivals, fairs, or any of the modern schemes of money getting, by voluntary contributions, religiously made as an offering to God—the fruit of industry, self-denial, and true
philanthropy—offerings so made as to bless the offerer and promote the growth of faith and hope and love in the church.

It is desirable that as many churches as possible should be enlisted in this work before next October, and that their delegates shall then be prepared to report the amount of aid that can be given within a year—as much of it as can be previously raised being sent by the delegates to the October Convention.

We are in perfect sympathy with the object of this movement. It has been our settled conviction for twenty years past—a conviction frequently expressed during our official connection with the A. C. M. S.—that we shall never be blessed as we desire in home missions until we learn to labor worthily in foreign fields and come into full sympathy with the divine philanthropy that breathes in the apostolic commission in behalf of “all the world,” and of “every creature.”

We are fully in sympathy with this movement on the part of the sisterhood in our churches. We see in it the dawn of a new era of activity and spiritual growth for Christian women—a bright promise of the development of an immense wealth of resources hitherto largely neglected, and a great increase of power in the church for high and grand achievement. We believe it will meet with universal approval. We have had no heart to join in the censures so often launched against female vanity, frivolity, pride and extravagance. We have waited until we could point to other and better channels into which the sympathies and energies of women could be directed. We believe that as soon as objects of interest worthy to to fill a woman’s heart are presented, much that we will complain of will be dismissed from her sympathies for the sake of that which is worthier. It is vain to theorize against popular follies and extravagances. Open the right channels of activity, and a grander development of womanly grace, dignity and strength will soon be seen.

Let us say in conclusion, that Sister Pearre will cheerfully answer all inquiries and furnish all desired information to those who seek it. She can be addressed at Iowa City, Iowa. If we have used her name freely, contrary to her own injunction, it is because, as the originator of this movement, she is bound to come into public notice and be responsible for it until it is properly organized. We advise our sisters in all our churches to begin at once to confer on this question and adopt such measures as will bring them into cordial and effective co-operation in this noble work.

Already the hearts of those engaged in it are drawn to each other in holy sympathy, and genuine sisterly love is finding rich development. We hope that by
the October Convention $1,000 will be in hand, or within reach, so that work may be immediately begun.

3 Sarah “Caroline” Neville Pearre (1831-1910) [https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/61034729/sarah-%22caroline%22-pearre](https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/61034729/sarah-%22caroline%22-pearre)
4 Because of the Civil War, support for the A. C. M. S. missionary J. O. Beardslee ran so low that the Jamaica Mission closed in 1864.