
Levi Pennington

People

3-11-1920

The Forward Movement of Friends in America, March 11, 1920

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Recommended Citation

Pennington, Levi T., "The Forward Movement of Friends in America, March 11, 1920" (1920). *Levi Pennington*. 401.
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**THE FORWARD MOVEMENT OF FRIENDS
IN AMERICA**

220 COLONIAL BUILDING : SEVENTH AND MAIN STS.

TELEPHONE 4161

RICHMOND, IND.

April, 1920.

Dear Friend:

For some time I have desired to get a personal message to pastors and leading members of the Five Years Meeting in regard to the work of the Forward Movement. Will you not give this letter your earnest personal attention, and where advisable bring it to the attention of those whom it might be helpful?

Those who have been chosen to take the lead in the Forward Movement are naturally gratified at the hearty approval and the enthusiastic response with which the Movement has been received in most of the territory of the Five Years Meeting. Many meetings are giving thanks for the new life and power that have come as a result of their participation in it.

But the Forward Movement leaders are just as naturally concerned and deeply concerned regarding those meetings and those members, some of them in places of leadership, who thus far have held themselves aloof, neglecting and in some cases refusing to have anything to do with the Forward Movement.

Nobody claims that the Forward Movement has been perfectly conducted. It was a new venture, with no roads built, no trails blazed even. Cooperation on the part of those who could have helped has been sometimes slow, sometimes difficult, sometimes impossible to secure. But waiving all complaints that Friends of the Five Years Meeting could make against the Forward Movement leaders and all that these leaders could make against their complainants, the question that every Friend and every Friends meeting ought to face is this: Under circumstances as they actually exist, what shall we do? What will be most to the glory of God, the advancement of His Kingdom, the upbuilding of the Society of Friends, and the good of souls for whom Christ died?

A Spiritual Movement

The Forward Movement is a spiritual movement; a movement to help men to find the power of prayer; to help them to come more fully into the spirit of Christ; to labor more earnestly for the advancement of His kingdom through evangelism; to propagate the Quaker message of direct, personal, first-hand relationship with God through our Lord Jesus Christ; the message of love and good-will to all mankind; of helpful service to all who need. It is a movement to help our members especially the young, to hear and obey the call of God to Christian service. Do we not believe in these things? Then should

we not fall into line with the Forward Movement, which seeks to advance them? What will be the effect if we do not? Shall we aid these causes by repudiating or opposing or neglecting the movement that is seeking to advance them?

A Real Forward Movement

The underlying cause of the Forward Movement was the feeling that we as Friends were not doing all we ought for the advancement of God's work in the world. The occasion of it was the belief that we are or may become a sufficiently united people to do a big thing together. Some yearly meetings are poor in purse but rich in opportunities and man-power; some are more prosperous financially but with fewer young men and women to enter the active service of God. Each yearly meeting has some needs that it cannot itself provide for; each has some wealth that it can use to the assistance of the other yearly meetings. It is the aim of the Forward Movement to advance the interests and all the interests of every yearly meeting; to aid the evangelistic and church extension work of every yearly meeting; to advance the work on every mission field; to help every Friends college and academy; to make more efficient every department of our work. What shall we do with the Forward Movement? Will the cause of Christ be advanced by repudiating or opposing or rejecting or neglecting a movement that has for its aims such things as these?

A Financial Movement

Every Forward Movement leader believes that unless God moves and works through us, no real work worthy of the name can be accomplished. But we also believe that God is willing to work, that He is working, that He is calling for us to do our part. We must provide the money and the men. We must man our share of the great Christian enterprise, and furnish the finances for its successful execution.

After prayerful consideration for months, the Forward Movement budget has been fixed for the coming year at one million dollars for current work, with an endowment fund of \$3,000,000 for educational work. Will anyone say it is more than we ought to provide for the work for which Jesus Christ gave his life? Will anyone claim that it is more than 85,000 Friends in the Five Years Meeting can and ought to give? There are some millionaires among our members. There are scores, perhaps hundreds, who are worth more than \$100,000 each. There are hundreds of Friends who ought to give thousands of dollars each; thousands who ought to give hundreds of dollars each. There are hundreds of our members who have been increasing their wealth without proper acknowledgement of their stewardship, and who ought to give more than a tenth of their accumulations, not confining themselves to income. We can raise our entire income if we desire. If we do not do it, it will be because we are not willing to do it.

How will you feel if the financial campaign fails, and you did not do your part? Will the Friends church be encouraged to go on in its larger work for the Kingdom of God, or will it feel the chill of failure, the depression of attempting and not achieving? The rest of the Christian world knows what we are attempting. Many of the other denominations have already succeeded in their efforts, accomplished their projects, reached their financial goals; others will do so in the financial campaign this spring. How shall we feel if we fail?

Will God be pleased if we fail to accomplish the thing we believe He has led us to attempt? And shall you feel comfortable to kneel before Him and say, "Lord, the financial campaign failed, and so far as my efforts were concerned, I let it fail."

The Call of the Work

In Africa, Alaska, America, our representatives on the foreign mission field are looking to us to know what we will do in this day of Gods power. Selfsacrificing, struggling frontier pastors are watching to see whether we who are comfortable are going to share our comforts with them. Teachers who are serving in Friends schools for half what they could get elsewhere are waiting to learn what we are going to do for the education, the Christian, Friendly education, of our young people. The destiny of souls for whom Christ died hangs on our decisions in this matter of our financial campaign. Shall we weigh our dollars against their souls and decide to keep our dollars and let their souls be lost?

What Will You Do?

Will you stay out of this movement, refuse to work in this financial campaign, fail to support this united project? Will you desert our foreign missonaries on the firing line of God's great battle of salvation of the world? Will you deny your support to the pioneer preachers on our frontiers? Will you say to scores of young people ready to go to the foreign field, "We will not send you to bear the news of salvation to those who are dying without it"?

Brethern, we are persuaded better things of you. However poorly we have brought to you the call of God to higher, nobler, fuller, better service than we have yet known, "We have confidence in the Lord concerning you that ye both do and will do the thing that He commands you."

With an earnest prayer that He may guide us all, that we may see His will clearly and do it faithfully,

Sincerely your friend,

Levi T. Pennington,
Director Forward Movement
of Friends in America.