

Letter - to the Female Missionary Society 1824

by Charles Finney

Charles Finney reports on the progress of the Female Missionary Society's work in the Western District, highlighting the success of the revival and the importance of spreading the gospel.

Scripture: Isaiah 61:1, Matthew 28:19

Topics: "Missionary Work", "Revival"

Description

Charles Finney addresses the Female Missionary Society, sharing the remarkable progress of the reformation in Evans' Mills and surrounding areas. He highlights the hopeful conversions among the local population, including a significant movement in a Dutch settlement where many have begun to understand the necessity of true faith. Finney emphasizes the importance of continued prayer and support for the mission, noting the growing seriousness and commitment among the people. He encourages the society to persist in spreading the gospel, as the revival has begun to transform lives and communities. Finney expresses gratitude for their support and urges them to remain steadfast in their mission.

Transcript

To the Female Missionary Society of the Western District

30 September 1824

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MR. FINNEY'S JOURNAL.

The blessed work of reformation in the region of Evans' Mills goes on. It has extended its influence to Lerays Ville, a small village about three miles distant from Evans' Mills. Several very interesting cases of hopeful conversion have occurred there, and appearances indicate a general movement among the "dry bones" in that valley where Satan has held his seat. The work has commenced among the first class in society, in point of talent and influence; and our earnest prayer to the blessed Head of the church is, that the foundations of Satan's empire in that place may be rased.

In a settlement of High Dutch people, not far distant from Evans' Mills, and in the opposite direction from Lerays Ville, are circumstances of uncommon interest. In their settlement is a Dutch Reformed church, numbers of which were unconverted. The people are for the most part unlearned, and many of them

unable to read the sacred Scriptures in any language. Soon after my arrival at Evans' Mills, I appointed a lecture among them. There was a very general attendance, and they seemed disposed to receive instruction.

After this, I made it a practice to preach a third discourse among them, on the Sabbath, once in two weeks. Wickedness abounded among them to an alarming degree, and they seemed generally to suppose, that to belong to the church, be baptized, and partake of the Lord's supper, was religion enough. My method of preaching to them has been simple and familiar, but as plain and pointed as I was able. I have endeavored to convince them that the religion of such of them as had not been born again, was insufficient, and altogether an abomination to God.

And, blessed, forever blessed, be the God of our salvation, the word has taken surprising effect. The state of feeling there at present, is so interesting and affecting, that any but a heart of stone, must be moved in view of the simplicity and deep anxiety which they almost universally manifest. The work of the blessed Spirit is so deep among them, that the clearness of their views, with respect to the Divine justice, in casting them off forever, is truly astonishing. As my duties were so abundant, that it was impossible for me to visit their families, the last time I preached among them, I appointed the next day, at 1 o'clock, P.M. to meet them at their usual place of worship, for the purpose of familiar conversation with them upon the state of their minds.

It was a moving scene. The house was crowded, and I conversed a few moments with each one, which occupied several hours. A deep and universal feeling seemed to pervade the whole assembly. Those that were truly pious among them, poured forth their tears of mingled joy, gratitude, and deep solicitude for their anxious and distressed neighbors. The work in this region, seems to be enlarging its borders. I continue to labor alternately at Evans' Mills and at Antwerp. Our meetings increase in numbers and solemnity.

Much seriousness is apparent, and conversions are multiplying. Pray for us, pray for your almost exhausted missionary. It is impossible for me to calculate the number of hopeful conversions that have occurred since I have been in your employ, in this region. But dear [page 18] sisters, it is certain, I think, that "the blessing of many that are ready to perish will come upon you," for your work of love. O! go on, spread the blessed gospel, and may God bless you. I have spent in the execution of your commission, 12 Sabbaths, preached 77 discourses, attended 36 prayer, and 13 conference meetings, and made 469 family visits.

I have collected no monies, nor made application for any as yet, believing that the interests of religion would suffer by it. I have been advised, by several of my brethren, members of the presbytery, to defer it, until the excitement of the public mind shall have in some degree, at least, abated. I have been informed that the Missionary Societies at Evans' Mills have sent you what funds they had. They will probably at that place do something considerable to aid your funds. What they will finally do here, I cannot say. Much will doubtless depend upon the results of the revival.

You have already before you a brief account of my labors under my first commission. I will now give a short relation of my continuation, under the second. I have spent at Antwerp, on my last commission, five Sabbaths, and at Evans' Mills, seven. The church at Antwerp, when your missionary arrived there, consisted of only sixteen members, three of these only, were males. Forty-one has been added by your missionary; eleven of whom, are male heads of families. The work of grace there, though not so general,

and powerful as at Evans' Mills, has however, been deeply interesting. Several cases have occurred, when whole families have come forward at once. The parents dedicating themselves, with their households, to God at the same time. Religion is still in an interesting state at that place; several are yet without the visible church, who have hopefully experienced a change of heart. I formed there a Female Missionary Society, auxiliary to yours, of which you have an account from its Secretary.

The people there are exceedingly anxious to obtain the stated ordinances of the blessed gospel, but they are poor, and without considerable aid from Missionary Societies, at least for a time, I am confident they cannot succeed. May the blessed Head of the church open up the way, that that dear people, may enjoy the labors of some faithful servant of his, who may "break unto them the bread of life." The revival has scattered its blessings through several of the neighborhoods, and indeed, mostly throughout the town of Leray, and in some places, in the adjoining towns. Cases of hopeful conversion have been numerous, although it has not been accurately ascertained, yet the number of hopeful conversions in the town of Leray is supposed to be not less than two hundred. This number may be too large. Numbers have united with churches of different denominations; how many with each, or with either, I am unable to say; and many who are hopeful converts remain as yet unconnected with any church.

The work in the Dutch Settlement, of which mention was made in my former report, is still slowly progressing, owing, probably, to the fact, that it has not been subject to so much sectarian influence as at other places. It has been powerful and affecting in that place [page 19] and has extended its influence to an adjoining neighborhood, where it now goes on with great power.

At Leray's Ville, mentioned in my former report, there have been several interesting cases of hopeful conversion, and there are yet several cases of conviction; but it is greatly to be feared that the blessed work is fast yielding to the benumbing influence of sectarian feeling.

Under my last commission, I have spent twelve Sabbaths, preached seventy-seven times, attended eighteen conference, twenty-seven prayer, and nine church meetings. Administered the Lord's supper four times, made three hundred and seventy family calls, and received the following monies.

At Antwerp, & By contributions, \$15.44

From branch society, 14.72

At Evans' Mills, & By contributions, 40.00

Amount, 70.16

I would in justice to those places, remark, that the people seemed willing to aid your society, to the full extent of their means, and would doubtless have done more, had it not been for the exceeding scarcity of cash, in that region.

And now, may the blessing of heaven rest upon your society. May He who owns the "silver and the gold, and the cattle on a thousand hills" pour without measure, into the lap of your treasurer, until through your agency, these western forests shall smile, and "the desert places of our land, shall blossom like the rose." This is the ardent prayer of your unworthy missionary, and doubtless of many among whom he has labored.

Yours affectionately, in the gospel of our Lord Jesus.

Evans' Mills, Sept. 30, 1824.

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