

MEMOIR
OF THE
REV. JOSEPH W. BARR,

LATE MISSIONARY

UNDER THE DIRECTION OF THE
WESTERN FOREIGN MISSIONARY SOCIETY,

WHO DIED AT RICHMOND, VA., OCTOBER 28, 1832, WHEN
ON THE EVE OF HIS EMBARKATION FOR
WESTERN AFRICA.

COMPILED BY E. P. SWIFT,
Corresponding Secretary of the Society.

"You have lost his life—lose not his death."
JAY, as quoted by the father of Mr. Barr.

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Special project and collection

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TO THE READER.

THE mournful event to which this little volume owes its existence, was as extraordinary in the history of modern missions, as the feeling of public sorrow, and christian sympathy which it produced was deep and universal. To a young Society, just commencing its operations, and intending to commence them with an enterprise as urgent and important as it was eventful and dangerous, the Lord of the harvest had given two youthful soldiers of the cross, apparently possessing in an eminent degree the qualifications requisite for such an undertaking. Every preparation for their embarkation for Africa had been made; the parting scene with beloved relatives and friends had passed,—and a few hours was to have borne them from their native shores. While thus waiting the moment of departure, a pestilential disease seizes upon the halest and healthiest of the two, and after a few brief struggles of his vigorous constitution with the terrific malady, he who had longed to suffer and to die for Christ beneath the burning sun of Africa, sinks in death, amidst the kind attentions of Christians, and ere he is permitted to enter upon his self-denying course. A thousand hearts which had already throbbed with gratitude and delight, in anticipation of the results of so heroic and so humane an enterprise, are struck with astonishment, as he falls, and while the eye of deep amazement fastens upon the survivor, as *alone* he sets forward on the eventful expedition, the solemn knell of death sounds long, and in tones of deep mournfulness, and monitory import, to the utmost limits of the Presbyterian church. The grave seldom closes upon a man who possessed higher qualifications for a missionary to the heathen; or one who is among his particular acquaintances more sincerely and deservedly esteemed.

The life of a young man, whose habits have been uniform, and whose years have been passed in the retired and quiet scenes of home, can be expected, at the period when his education is just finished, to present few striking incidents, and few strong points of char-

acter. The following Memoir, if perused under the impression of this obvious truth, will not, it is hoped, prove an uninteresting book. It contains an Introduction, by the Rev. Dr. Alexander, in which the subject of Missions is presented in as strong and convincing a form as we recollect ever to have seen it. We would commend this article to the prayerful and earnest attention of all who sincerely desire to know their duty in reference to the heathen.

The account of Mr. Barr which follows, is chiefly composed of materials furnished by his venerable father, and these consisting principally of extracts from his own letters: with such notices as were furnished by those who best knew him. It has been thought proper to incorporate with this part of the work a brief historical view of the origin and plans of the Society, of which Mr. Barr was one of the first Missionaries.

The Discourse of the Rev. Dr. Miller, delivered in the Seminary at Princeton, on the occasion of his death, which next follows, is one of the happiest specimens of that kind of preaching which consists in a judicious, seasonable, affectionate, and solemn application of the dispensations of heaven to the practical purposes of life.

The Appendix to this little volume, besides two or three Notes, contains a selection from some of Mr. Barr's letters. A very considerable proportion of those which have been furnished, seemed to have nearly equal claims to a place in this work; and as a large number of them were received at too late a period to admit of making any other arrangement, they are published in the order of their dates. The article of the Appendix under note A. had not come to hand when the compiler was obliged to leave home on the business of the society, and it is therefore inserted without a perusal, to see how far it records facts which may have been previously anticipated. If it should please the Holy One of Israel to bless the book to the edification and improvement of the reader, and to any increase of compassion for the perishing heathen, our labor will not have been in vain.

COMPILER.

PITTSBURGH, MARCH, 1833.

INTRODUCTORY DISCOURSE

BY

ARCHIBALD ALEXANDER, D. D.

**Professor of Didactic and Polemic Theology, in the
Theological Seminary at Princeton.**

That the last command of the risen Saviour imposes an obligation on the ministry, and on the church now existing on earth, is too plain to need much confirmation or illustration. To suppose that this command was restricted to the apostles, to whom it was at first addressed, would be to suppose, that Christ gave them a command which could not possibly be executed; for in the short period of their lives, upon earth, they could not have transiently visited all the nations of the world, much less have made them disciples by instructing them in the Christian religion. And to suppose that this commission does not remain in full force, in every age, until the work is accomplished, would be to entertain the absurd opinion, that the conversion of the world, which was so dear to the Saviour when he sent out his apostles, has since become indifferent to him; and if he does not command it any longer, it cannot be the duty of any to undertake it. But if the object is still precious in his sight, and must be accomplished, on whom does it devolve, but on the church and ministry? And how can it be accomplished unless men are found willing to "go into all the world to" preach the gospel? And how can they preach except they be sent?

Again, let the ministers of the gospel ask themselves, by what authority they exercise the sacred office? Are they not obliged to trace it up to this very commission? Now, if they are acting under this commission, they can never evade the obligation to "go and teach all nations." All, therefore, who assume the sacred office, incur the solemn responsibility of aiding with their best efforts, the execution of this work.

It might seem to be an objection to this application of our Saviour's command, that it would require every preacher of the gospel to become a foreign missionary. Well, unless he can satisfy his conscience that he can better serve the cause of his Master at home, the inference must be admitted. This leads me to remark, that no principle of Christian duty is more undoubted than this, that every disciple of Christ is under obligations to go any where, or do any work, which will most effectually subserve the interests of his kingdom. And of course, every minister is bound to go wherever he is persuaded his labors can be most serviceable in promoting this great cause. There is not one of the whole number who is exempt from the obligation to go to the remotest corner of the earth, if by so doing, he can be more useful in the conversion of the world, than by remaining at home. And, perhaps, there are many now remaining at ease in Zion, who ought to be laboring among the heathen, in some foreign land. This subject has not received from ministers that solemn and impartial consideration, which its importance demands; otherwise, we should not find so many ministers stationed where they are but little needed, and

occupied with concerns which have no direct relation to the Redeemer's kingdom; and we should not have forced upon us, the painful reflection that "all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's." But it is not intended, that all should actually go abroad to preach the gospel. There are some who cannot be spared from the important stations which they now fill in the church at home. There have been men, too, whose labors at home have been as self-denying as those of any foreign missionary; and such men as Mills, Worcester, Evarts, and Cornelius, more effectually promoted the conversion of the heathen, by laboring with the churches in this land, to induce them to aid the cause, than if they had actually gone to foreign lands. And the same is true of Fuller, Rane, Orme, Bogue, and Scott, in England. Others are prevented by Providential hindrances, which clearly indicate the will of Heaven, in regard to them. And it cannot be denied, that there are some who may fill some vacancy at home with advantage, who are not fitted for foreign service. Besides, we must beware of thinking that those who are faithfully employed in the vineyard at home, are not doing a work as acceptable to their Lord, as those who go to the distant heathen. "Feed my sheep"—"Feed my lambs,"—are as really the commands of a risen Saviour, as "go teach all nations"—"Preach the gospel to every creature." So, in the apostles' days, each church had its presbyters, whose ministerial duties were circumscribed within the limits of the society which they served. And now, when a nation is converted to Christ, teachers must remain with

the newly made disciples, to instruct them more particularly, in all the doctrines and precepts of the gospel. As if an army should be directed by their sovereign, to conquer and take possession of a country, when a province was subdued, while part of the army marched onward to complete the conquest, it would be necessary for another part to garrison the strong places, and to retain under their power, the people already subjugated. All ministers should feel that they are soldiers belonging to one and the same army of the Captain of salvation; and all equally bound to obey his high commands, to fight the battles of the Lord, at home or abroad; to go on a forlorn hope, to besiege some strong citadel of the enemy; or to exercise a watch over those already reduced to subjection.

Since, then, there is but one leader—one army—and one service,—the only inquiry of importance, for every man, is, “Am I in my allotted place? Have I the command of my Lord for occupying the station which I am in?” All ministers and all candidates for the ministry, ought to ponder on this subject with unceasing solicitude and prayer. In order to determine where Christ would have us to labor, we ought to consider in what manner the laborers in the field are distributed. Is the number among the heathen as great as it should be, considering the multitude of unconverted pagans? or is it disproportionably small? That the latter is still the fact, no reflecting man can doubt. Then, there are ministers at home, who ought to be among the heathen. There are men, who, when the Lord by his Providence has commanded them to

go to Nineveh and prophesy there, have turned their faces another way. But they cannot prosper. Dark storms and overwhelming waves will encompass them, until their feet get into the right path.

I do not stop to answer the objections which are still heard against foreign missions, from one and another; as that we have heathen enough at home, to give full employment to all our preachers; that by sending our zealous and enterprising young men to the heathen, we are weakening and injuring the churches at home; for these objections would have been just as valid against the apostles' leaving Judea, the land of their nativity. There was in that country work enough for many more than twelve men. Jerusalem alone could have found them occupation; but what would have become of their high commission, to convert the world?

The Christian church, which is founded in benevolence, has yet an important lesson to learn, in relation to Christ's ministers. Any particular branch of the church ought to be willing to relinquish the most useful and beloved pastor, with cheerfulness, if there is good reason to think, that he can be more useful in another place. And when hundreds of millions of perishing heathen, by their necessities, are perpetually sending forth the cry, "come over and help us," shall we proceed upon the mere selfish calculations of personal interest? Piety forbids it. When ministers themselves shall be less under the influence of personal and worldly motives, in selecting their field of labor, we may hope that the churches will learn that the benefit of the

whole and not any small part, should govern them in all their conduct.

Besides, the inquiry, whether ministers have all performed their duty in relation to foreign missions, there is yet another interesting subject for our consideration, in which most of us have a deep interest. It is, whether those ministers who feel it to be their duty to labor in the churches at home, have done all that was in their power to aid and encourage those who have gone to the heathen. Here, I think, there is cause of self-condemnation, which we must all acknowledge. We have not, in this respect, done our duty. We have not, as we ought, remembered those dear men, who are cut off from all the privileges of civilized society, with sufficient frequency, tenderness, and earnestness, at the throne of grace. We have not exerted ourselves, half as much as we might have done, to awaken a missionary spirit among the people committed to our charge. Indeed, we must all confess, that this spirit has not glowed with sufficient warmth, in our own bosoms. We have not compassionated the wretched condition of our brethren of the human family, as that divine commandment requires, which says, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Verily, we of the ministry have, on this subject, much cause for confusion of face, and contrition of heart, when we consider what Christ has done or suffered for us, and how little we have done and suffered for Him, and for the salvation of those for whom he died.

But ministers are not the only persons who are concerned in this subject. The whole

church is loaded with a heavy responsibility, as it relates to the conversion of the world. Ministers, indeed, must execute the work, so far as preaching the gospel and administering the sacraments are concerned; but the support of missionaries must come from the people. The churches must come to feel, that the promotion of this object was one of the principal reasons of their organization. They must be brought to consider this, the most important work in which they can be engaged upon earth; and they must learn to esteem it a privilege, to give of their worldly substance to advance the Redeemer's kingdom. The time will come, when men will be covetous of gain, not that they may consume it on their lusts, but that they may cast it into the treasury of the Lord. Labor and watching, and privations and sacrifices, will be rendered not only tolerable, but sweet, by the powerful influence of the love of Christ. Love can make the heaviest burden light; the most galling yoke, easy. The people, instead of being losers by the diffusion of a missionary spirit, will have their enjoyments refined and multiplied, manifold. And the effect of this spirit on Christians will be most felicitous. It will make them be of one heart and one mind, and will bind them together in bonds so gentle, that they will be rendered incapable of biting and devouring one another, any more.

And here I must be permitted to express my regret, that the Presbyterian church, which is not exceeded by any other denomination, in the means of usefulness, has, in so small a degree,

entered into the missionary operations of the day. In many large sections of our extended denomination, the attention of the people scarcely begins to be awakened to this subject. The intelligence has scarcely reached some of our churches, that the Lord has been carrying on a glorious work in the world, and has caused the light of the gospel to shine on dark regions which were never before visited by these celestial rays. What can be done to call forth the energies of these professed disciples of Jesus? How can this numerous corps of the enlisted host of God, now so far in the rear, be brought forward to take their place in the front of the battle? This has been a subject of deep solicitude with many; and **THE WESTERN SOCIETY FOR FOREIGN MISSIONS**, owes its existence to no other cause. It has not arisen from any feeling of jealousy or dissatisfaction towards the American Board of Foreign Missions, whose wise, extensive, and energetic plans, have secured for it a reputation which never can be tarnished; but it was perceived, that, owing to the location of this board, and the peculiar habits and views of many of our churches, they could never be brought to lend to the cause of missions, that aid and encouragement which they are well able to afford. It was, therefore, deemed expedient, and even necessary, to institute a society for conducting foreign missions, within the limits of the Presbyterian church, and under the control of her judicatories. And it was, moreover, judged to be most proper, to locate this institution in that section of country, where the people, generally, are most ardent in their attachment to

the order and government of the Presbyterian church, and least disposed to unite with other ecclesiastical bodies in plans for the advancement of the Redeemer's kingdom. Indeed, the idea of a western missionary society, originated with the members of the Synod of Pittsburgh, who are the best qualified to judge of the necessity that exists for such an institution, to draw forth the resources, and enlist the pious energies of the churches, in that region. Whether it was wise to enter on this enterprise, in the present state of our church, is a point on which there will be different opinions; and it is a question which I do not wish, at present, to discuss; but as the step has been taken, and a new missionary society has been actually formed, under favorable auspices, I cannot hesitate in believing, that they ought to go forward with zeal and alacrity; and to exert themselves to the utmost, to awaken a missionary spirit in all the region round about them; and in other places, also, where the churches have remained inactive, on this most interesting subject. If, as we believe, the Presbyterian church, in her doctrines and ecclesiastical order, is nearer to the apostolical model, than any other denomination, she ought undoubtedly to go before all others in her zeal and efforts to bring the whole world under the dominion of Christ.

I do not agree in opinion with those who think, that all missionary operations should be under the management of one society. When the transactions of a particular board become multifarious and complicated, it will always be the consequence, that some stations will be ne-

glected, and some concerns imperfectly attended to: and this opinion is not merely the result of theory, but is sanctioned by the mature experience of the Baptist missionaries in India, who have had as good an opportunity of judging correctly as any men living. It would, therefore, give me no uneasiness to learn, that the churches in our connection, in the Southern states, had resolved to institute a society for foreign missions. The only strong objection to having more societies than one operating within the limits of the Presbyterian church, is, the danger of strife and collision; but if the proper missionary spirit should govern the members and agents of the several societies, I venture to predict that this evil will, in a very small degree, be realized. Collections may be made for two societies, even in the same congregation, without enkindling the least animosity, or occasioning the least strife. Let every church and every individual, make their own selection of the society which shall receive their funds. The evil which has arisen from the "separate action" of the two great domestic boards, has, in my opinion, been owing to mismanagement. But I will not venture further on this delicate ground. The Western Society for Foreign Missions already exists, and begins to act with an energy which encourages the hearts of the friends of missions. From the success which has attended their incipient efforts, there is reason to expect, that the most sanguine hopes of those who formed the enterprise, will be more than realized. Liberal contributions have been received from a number of churches, which heretofore have done little or nothing for

this cause. And missionaries of high qualifications, have promptly offered their services.

It has been an object of absorbing interest and painful solicitude, to this society, just commencing its operations, to fix on the spot, where they should first attempt to erect the banner of the cross among the heathen; and after much consultation, deliberation, and prayer, they have resolved, that **CENTRAL AFRICA** combines more advantages, and presents more facilities, for a successful mission, than any other unoccupied heathen land. China and Japan are, indeed, equally needy, and more dense in their population; but, at present, the access of missionaries to those countries is precluded. India has already numerous missionary stations, and may be said to be partially evangelized. Burmah is assailed on several points by the Baptist missionaries; and the American Board have it in contemplation, speedily to establish a missionary station in Siam, where for some time, one of their missionaries has been making the requisite inquiries. In the islands of the Pacific, and among the aborigines of North America, God has wrought wonders, through the instrumentality of missionaries. These fields are already occupied, and those societies in Europe and America, which have directed their attention to them, and also to South Africa, are fully competent to increase the number of laborers, as they may be needed. But **CENTRAL AFRICA** is yet without a missionary station. The Swiss missionaries did, indeed, attempt an establishment near to the colony of Liberia, but their pious en-

terprise was defeated by the fatal malaria of the coast, which cut off most of them, before they had fairly commenced operations. But in the interior, there is good ground to believe, that the climate is much more salubrious, than on the coast. From the recent accounts of travelers, it would seem, that there are in this region, numerous tribes or nations, in a much more advanced state of civilization, than those which are found on the coast; and it does not appear, that they are subject to many epidemic diseases; or, that their fevers are of a very malignant kind. And, what is of immense importance, the inhabitants of these regions do not appear to be of a ferocious or blood-thirsty disposition; but on the contrary, to be very friendly to white men; so that travelers have passed among them, with as little personal danger, as they could have done in many parts of our own country. And the principal difficulty has been, to get permission to leave the country; for the chiefs of those tribes, are so sensible of the superiority of white men, that they are very desirous to avail themselves of their presence and assistance; this disposition is rather favorable than adverse to the object which missionaries wish to promote.

But, perhaps, that circumstance which, above all others, recommends the middle region of Africa, as the most eligible country for a new missionary station, is, the existence of the colony of Liberia, on the western coast. The importance of having a friendly colony in the vicinity, or within an accessible distance of a missionary station, must be obvious to every one. The mere knowledge of the existence of such a colony

would be a protection to missionaries; especially as the military prowess of the Liberians is well known among the natives through a wide extent of territory. The colony, moreover, would furnish a refuge for the missionaries, if they should be driven away by the people among whom they had fixed their residence. And the frequency of the intercourse between this country and Liberia, would enable the society to communicate, constantly, with their missionaries, and to send them such supplies and reinforcements, as might be needed. Indeed, the colony of Liberia may itself be considered as a large and important missionary station. And among those persons of color, whose spirit will move them to go to this land of promise, there will doubtless be some, who will be eminently qualified to act as missionaries, or helps to missionaries, in that country. God seems to have raised up this colony, as the first step towards the civilization and Christianization of benighted Africa. And here, perhaps, we begin to see unraveled that mysterious dispensation of Providence, by which so many of the children of Africa were transported to this continent, and the West India Islands. While the conduct of men, and Christian men too, was most culpable, the design of God was, that these people should here imbibe the knowledge of our holy religion, and of the arts of civilized life, and should carry them back to bless the land of their forefathers. However injurious the slave-trade has been, to a large portion of this country; and however unjust to the oppressed Africans—of both which every impartial man must be deeply convinced—yet he who takes a

comprehensive view of the whole subject, must be satisfied, that ultimate good will be the result of bringing the African race to America. Already, multitudes have received the blessings of the gospel, who, if they had remained, or been born in Africa, must have perished in their idolatry. And if, by the agency of the colonization society, that dark continent should become illumined with the rays of gospel light, how grand will be the result?

It was, indeed, a dark dispensation which so unexpectedly cut down one of the missionaries of the Western Foreign Missionary Society, who had recently devoted himself to Africa, and was actually prepared to embark for that continent. How richly he was endowed, and how well qualified for this work, I leave it to others to describe. The Memoir which follows, will contain every thing which his mourning friends, and a sympathising Christian community, can desire to see published. I will only say, in one word, that take him all in all, JOSEPH BARR was not inferior to any man with whom I have been acquainted, in the substantial qualifications of a good missionary. But God's ways, though surrounded with darkness, are always right. "THY WILL BE DONE."

But melancholy as this event is, it ought not to damp the zeal or discourage the efforts of this society. It is doubtless intended as a trial of their faith: and it is possible, that disastrous as this event may appear to be to us, it may be overruled, greatly to subserve the cause of missions, in the western country, and in this whole land. It is calculated to arouse the attention of

the churches, and to lead many to the serious inquiry, whether they have done their duty, in relation to the perishing heathen. It is possible, that this dear young man, by his death, in our own land, may accomplish more than he would have done, had he been spared to visit Africa. Better that he should die at home, than on a coast which already holds out terrors enough to frighten most white men from thinking of a permanent residence there. The circulation of this memoir will, I trust, have a powerful effect on many of the rising youth of the west, who are preparing for the ministry; or who ought to be looking towards this sacred office. Truly, "he being dead yet speaketh." Young man, whoever thou art, who readest these pages, Joseph Barr speaketh to *you*, and the import of his address is—"Arise and take my place; prepare to occupy the field from which I have been called away." Young men of piety and talents! Providence is affording you a glorious opportunity of winning a rich prize. The world never before presented such a field for successful exertion. The heathen are becoming accessible at almost every point; and their disposition to receive the gospel is becoming, every year, more favorable; and the churches are more and more manifesting a willingness to sustain all who are disposed to engage in the work. The only painful inquiry is, "WHO WILL GO FOR US?" What is your answer, individually? Do I hear you respond, "HERE AM I, SEND ME?" Or will you prefer inglorious ease, and earthly advantages, to the labors and rewards of the faithful missionary? Surely, the day is coming when you

will not thus judge—that awful day, when our Lord shall take account of his servants, and of the manner in which they have occupied their talents. To some he will then say, “WELL DONE, GOOD AND FAITHFUL SERVANT ENTER INTO THE JOY OF THY LORD;” but to others, “OUT OF THINE OWN MOUTH WILL I CONDEMN THEE, THOU SLOTHFUL AND WICKED SERVANT.”

I cannot conclude this discourse without bespeaking an interest in the prayers of all the pious who may read these pages, in behalf of the friend and companion of Barr, the Rev. John B. Pinney; who, trusting in the Lord, has gone forth alone to Africa, to explore the country, and to fix on a proper place for a missionary station. Much seems to depend upon the preservation of his life, and the success of his exploring tour.

One of the first reflections which occurred to the writer, after the melancholy intelligence of the death of Barr reached him, was, that we had not been sufficiently engaged in prayer for his preservation and success. We are continually prone to lose a sense of dependence on God, for every thing. When these two young men were set apart to the work of the ministry, and consecrated to missionary efforts in Africa, in the presence of a multitude of people, the impression seemed to be strong on the minds of the Christian public, that they were destined to accomplish some great object: but our hope was too much founded on the zeal and qualifications of the men; and too little on the blessing of God, which alone can render enterprise successful. Let us, therefore, beware of this error, in all future time.