

## DOMESTIC MISSIONARY CHRONICLE.

DECEMBER, 1842.

## BOARD OF MISSIONS.

THE following letter from the Rev. Dr. Alexander, was addressed to the Secretary of the Board of Missions, and received at Elizabethtown N. Jersey, during the late meeting of the Synod of New-Jersey at that place. Dr. Alexander was unable to attend the meeting of the Synod, and he adopted this plan of communicating his views and feelings on a subject, which he knew would come before that body, and in which he feels, and has evinced a very deep and lively interest. The letter was read to the Synod, and to a large and deeply interested assembly of the people, convened in the First Presbyterian Church Elizabethtown. The letter was not written for publication; but believing that it is calculated to do good, and will be read with deep interest, we have obtained permission for its publication, and now submit it to our readers, with the hope, that they will ponder well its contents, and that God will make it instrumental of great good to the cause it so feelingly pleads.

Dear Sir.—As I cannot be present at the missionary meeting which you propose to hold at Elizabethtown, on Wednesday evening, I take this method of communicating the substance of what I might say if I were present.

I have been surprised and grieved to learn, that the contributions of the churches, to support domestic missions have been, of late, so inadequate. I scarcely know how to account for the apathy which so extensively prevails, on this subject. I know, indeed, that the times are hard; but much prosperity has attended the labours of the husbandman, for several years in succession. And granting, that the income of the most of those who heretofore contributed liberally to this object, is diminished; yet, when it is considered, how small a proportion of this has ever been contributed to the treasury of the Lord, I do not think that there exists any solid reason, why the sums heretofore bestowed on this object should be diminished. That expenditures should be diminished is right, but let the curtailment be made, not in our free-will offerings on the altar of God, but upon the luxuries of the table,

of dress, of furniture, and by cutting off mere superfluities. We should, as Christians, be cheerfully willing to deny ourselves in many indulgences and gratifications, which may be considered comforts of life, for the sake of sending the gospel to the thousands of destitute people in our country. The demand for missionary labour, instead of being diminished, is greatly increased. The number of our fellow citizens in the new states and territories, and in some of our older states, who are entirely destitute, is truly appalling. And in all places, the people are willing to receive missionaries, and in some, are most urgent in their entreaties, that faithful preachers of the gospel should be sent to them. In the whole state of Arkansas, now containing considerably above a hundred thousand souls, we have only two or three preachers of our denomination. In the capital of that state, where a Presbyterian church was organized ten or twelve years ago, we have had no stationed minister for several years. In Missouri, twenty missionaries would find an ample field of labour, among the destitute. In Iowa and Wisconsin, about

to become as flourishing as any parts of the United States, we have so few labourers, that the whole country, as it relates to our denomination, may be said to be one great vacancy. So also Michigan presents a wide and promising field, and in all the western and southwestern states, the new counties are destitute of the means of grace to a distressing degree. And even in New-York, New-Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Virginia, and North and South Carolina and Georgia, there are extensive regions, where the people are sitting under the shadow of death; and where the rays of the sun of righteousness give but a dim and feeble light, because the "word of life" is not held forth among the people. Soon the present generation will have passed away, and unless we speedily come to their aid, all opportunities of doing them good will have gone by forever. And let it be remembered, that we shall be held responsible, at the tribunal of Jesus Christ, for the communication of the gospel to our contemporaries, who are our fellow-citizens, and easily accessible to us. Here we have no wide ocean to cross, no new language to learn, no inveterate caste to hinder the propagation of the gospel. And while speaking of fields of missionary labour, I would present one, which has been sadly neglected, and yet, if cultivated, would, in my opinion yield a rich harvest. I mean the slave population of the south. Some of our zealous ministers, have indeed thrust in the sickle into this harvest, and are greatly encouraged with the apparent fruit of their labours; but in regard to this destitute people, it may truly be said, "the harvest is great, and the labourers few." And for a long time past, our Board has sent no labourers into this field, which is white for the harvest. The very best thing which we can do for Pagan Africa, at present, is to imbue with true religion, the minds of the African race in our own country. By means of these, it seems to be the design of Providence, that that dark continent should be regenerated.

I do sincerely hope that the Synod of

New-Jersey will not separate, until they have given a new impulse to the cause of missions, both foreign and domestic: between which there should never be set up any invidious distinction. The cause is one. The more we promote foreign missions, the more shall we be disposed to send the gospel to the destitute millions in our own country. And the more religion flourishes at home, the greater ability and disposition we shall have, to send the gospel to the heathen. What if our people should double their former contributions, would that ruin or impoverish them? no; it would be the mere tithe and first-fruits, which in all reason we are bound to bring to the treasury of the Lord. And it would be the most effectual method of bringing down the blessing of God upon all our labours and enterprizes. Have those congregations and families who have freely given, become poorer than their neighbours, in consequence of their liberality? No instance of the kind can be shown. On the contrary, the liberal soul is generally prospered. I hope, that the ministers and elders, composing the Synod, will imbibe a new spirit of liberality, and will go home determined to arouse a similar spirit in all around them, until the donations to the Lord's treasury, shall be so increased and multiplied, that it will become necessary, as of old, for a proclamation to be made, that the people stay their hands, because there is enough and more than enough already in hand. O how easy would it be for the Christian community, to bring about that very state of things; and yet nobody be the poorer for it. The time will come, and I cannot but hope that it is near at hand, when all this difficulty about funds, for the spread of the gospel, will be done away—when Christians will learn a lesson, which hitherto they have been very slow to learn, that the richest enjoyment of wealth is to give its increase to the treasury of the Lord; and that the sweetest of incentives to labour is the hope of gaining something, that we may aid in furthering the cause of God. The excuses for our want of liberality are utterly futile—they are worse, they are often impious. If

we are Christians, let us act like Christians, and not dishonour the sacred name, by a base, selfish, avaricious spirit, which keeps back from the treasury of the Lord, what is due. If we are Christians, indeed, we owe not only our wealth, but *ourselves* to the Redeemer, who has bought us with a price. Was He willing to purchase our salvation, by pouring out his blood, and shall we be unwilling to give liberally of what He has given us, to promote his cause? The very heathen will rise up, in judgment against narrow-hearted Christians; for they expend ten times as much on their idols, as these do in supporting and propagating a religion which is truly divine, and which is the only hope of salvation. O that men would remember, that they are but stewards, and that God will require a strict account of the manner in which they dispense what has been committed to them!

Yours truly, A. ALEXANDER

#### ACTION OF THE SYNOD OF NEW JERSEY.

*Extract from the Minutes of the Synod of New Jersey, in Session at Elizabethtown, October 20th, 1842.*

The committee appointed to take into consideration the subject of Domestic Missions, and to confer with the Secretary of the Assembly's Board of Missions, respectfully recommend the adoption of the following minute.

Having heard from the Rev. Dr. Wm. A. McDowell, Secretary of the Assembly's Board of Missions, a statement respecting the urgent demands made upon the Board for aid by feeble and destitute churches in the different States and Territories of our Union, and also of the utter inability of the Board to meet these demands, or even to continue the aid now rendered to those churches at present under the patronage of the Board, unless the funds of the Board be greatly augmented; the Synod earnestly recommend to all the churches under their care, to adopt some prompt, systematic and efficient means, to obtain contributions in aid of this, and the other benevolent and Christian operations of our Church.

In making this recommendation, the Synod are fully aware that there exist at this time peculiar difficulties in the way

of collecting funds; inasmuch as very many of those who were wont to contribute with cheerfulness in furtherance of our benevolent enterprises, have less means at command, and in fact are less able to contribute than formerly. Yet it should be remembered that in the feeble churches under the care of the Board, there exists from the very same cause an increased difficulty in supporting the Gospel among them, and increased necessity for aid.

Hitherto, the contributions of our Church members have been made from their abundance, and it may now be the design of God to try the faith of his people, and to see whether from their penury they will contribute what they can, and manifest their confidence in God and their love to his cause by a course of self-denial, which will enable them amidst all pressing difficulties, not only to continue, but even to enlarge their gifts in furtherance of the Redeemer's kingdom, and of the salvation of their perishing fellow-men. Let his people confide in his word and providence, and let "the abundance of their joy," if not "their deep poverty abound unto the riches of their liberality," and they may with confidence expect the blessing of God, enriching their souls with grace.

The Synod would earnestly recommend that arrangements be made in every congregation by which every individual will have an opportunity to contribute something in aid of the interests of our Zion; if it be but the widow's two mites.

The Synod would recommend to the Board of Missions to prepare and send, free of expense, to the Pastors and Sessions of the churches a plan for collecting funds, the provisions of which, may afford some important hints to such pastors and sessions as have not already in operation an efficient system, for securing the full co-operation of all the members in making their contributions to the Board.

As it is deemed by the Board of Missions of the utmost importance to the successful prosecution of their labours that they should have placed at their disposal for the present year, a sum not less than \$50,000: Therefore,