

LETTERS
ON THE OBSERVANCE
OF THE
MONTHLY CONCERT IN PRAYER:

ADDRESSED TO THE
MEMBERS OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN
THE UNITED STATES.

✓
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Letters on the observance of
the Monthly concert in

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE writer of the following Letters was requested by a revered and beloved friend to prepare something for publication on the subject to which they relate. He felt the more disposed to comply with this request, as he was not able to refer his friend to any existing manual on the same subject. The substance of what is found in the ensuing pages, was communicated in four numbers in a periodical. The whole is now presented in a revised and somewhat different form, with the humble hope that it may be blessed to the advancement of that precious cause for which alone it is desirable to live.

Princeton, Sept. 30, 1845.

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LETTERS

ON THE

OBSERVANCE OF THE MONTHLY CONCERT.



LETTER I.

Introductory remarks—Origin of the Monthly Concert—
Duty and Importance of attending it.

Christian Brethren : In the heart of every sincere disciple of Christ, there is no sentiment more firmly fixed, or more habitually recognized, than that of his entire dependence on God for every blessing, and the necessity and duty of unceasing prayer for all that he needs. Man can, in his own wisdom, devise nothing aright ; he can, in his own strength, accomplish nothing. It is not by human might or power, but by the Spirit of the living God, that any thing truly good is ever done towards promoting the spiritual interests of individuals or of mankind. In his hands are the hearts of all men, and he can “turn them whithersoever he pleaseth, as the rivers of water are turned.” We may devise

the most promising plans for doing good ; we may gather round us the most ample means for carrying our plans into effect ; and yet, after all, unless he “ with whom is the residue of the Spirit,” shall add his blessing, and make the means effectual, all will be vain. “ Paul may plant, and Apollos may water, but God alone can give the increase. He that planteth is nothing, and he that watereth is nothing, but God that showeth mercy.”

This sense of our dependence, for all good, on the power and grace of God, is essential to the spirit of true religion. Until we have some real, practical impression of it, we cannot either sincerely or rationally approach God in prayer, or cherish those sentiments which become us as sinners indebted to free and sovereign grace for every blessing. Hence we are exhorted to “pray without ceasing ;” to “pray always with all prayer and supplication in the spirit ;” and “in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving to make known our requests to God.”

And, accordingly, we find the pious, in all ages, acknowledging their dependence ; imploring with humble importunity the blessings of which they felt their need ; and con-

fessing their utter inability to gain them by their own wisdom or strength.

But further, not only do we find the pious represented throughout the Bible history, as importunately praying for the supply of their own wants, but also as *interceding* for their friends and brethren, and indeed for the whole church of God, and for the world of mankind. This duty is founded on the divine command to do so, and also on the fact, that every human being is bound to seek the happiness of his race, and, of course, is every Christian peculiarly bound to desire and endeavour to promote the welfare of the whole human family, and especially of all who belong to "the household of faith;" and it shows the wisdom as well as the benignity of our God, that the discharge of this duty is always adapted to carry with it its own reward. The more we feel and pray for our fellow-men, and, above all, the more we feel and pray for the enlargement of the Redeemer's kingdom, for the return of our revolted world to God and happiness, the more our benevolence is increased; the more we resemble our Father in heaven; and, of course, the more our own spiritual improvement and happiness are promoted.

But not only is *intercession* a duty incumbent upon every Christian, and a duty adapted to carry a rich benefit along with its discharge, but it is equally evident that UNION IN PRAYER is at once commanded, reasonable, and delightful. We are expressly commanded to pray for one another : James v. 16 ; and if all who belong to Christ are “ one body in him,” and “ members one of another ;” if, when “ one member suffers all the members suffer with it, and when one member rejoices all the members rejoice with it,” it follows that all who really belong to that body must and will delight in social united prayer ; prayer in which the flame of love, kindling from heart to heart, shall rise to the mercy-seat with a brighter and warmer affection.

Accordingly, our Master in heaven, in a variety of instances in his word, has recognized both the duty and the encouragement of this union in prayer on the part of his people. “ I say unto you, that if any two of you shall agree on earth, touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven.” Matt. xviii. 19. And not only have we this explicit *promise*, but the *example* of such prayers, and the remarkable *success* with which they were crown-

ed, in the inspired history, are as numerous as they are striking. When the ancient church was threatened with destruction by the conspiracy of wicked Haman, the pious Esther, being warned by Mordecai of the impending danger, sent word to the whole body of the the Jewish people within her reach, to spend three days in fasting and united supplication to God for deliverance. They did so ; and by the most wonderful dispensation of Providence, they were delivered from the power of their enemies. When Daniel was called upon by the king of Babylon, to interpret that king's forgotten dream, he engaged a number of his pious friends to unite with him in prayer, that he might be enabled to comply with the king's requisition ; and, in consequence, *that* was revealed to him which all the wise men and astrologers of the Babylonish court sought to find out in vain. So when the prophet Ezekiel predicted that the house of Israel was "about to be cleansed from all her iniquities ; to have her waste places built up, and her ruins to become like the garden of Eden," he subjoins in the next chapter, "yet, thus saith the Lord : I will be enquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them." Ezekiel xxxvi. 37. In the same strain does the

prophet Isaiah call upon the people of God to be importunate in praying for spiritual mercies. "Ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence, and give him no rest till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth." Isa. lxii. 7. In like manner, when the Apostle Peter was thrown into prison by Herod, the bloody tyrant, unceasing prayer was made by the church for his deliverance; and while they were actually engaged in supplications on his behalf, he was miraculously brought out of prison, and happily conducted to the very place where his friends were assembled and engaged in interceding for him. Acts xii. It was evidently in answer to extraordinary and united prayer, that the Israelites in the wilderness were made victorious over the army of Amalek. It was in answer to extraordinary and united prayer, that the immense army of the proud king of Assyria, which threatened the destruction of God's people in the days of Hezekiah, was destroyed in a single night. It is declared by the prophets Jeremiah and Daniel, to have been in answer to extraordinary and united prayer that God's ancient people were restored from the Babylonish captivity to their own land. And it is equally evident that it was

in answer to special and united prayer, in conformity with the Saviour's command, that, after tarrying in Jerusalem a number of days, and spending their time in fervent supplication for the Holy Spirit to be poured out upon them from on high, the day of Pentecost brought enlargement and glory on the persecuted and struggling church.

It was a deep conviction of the reality and importance of these considerations which led to the commencement of that CONCERT IN PRAYER on the first Monday of every month, which has been so long observed by a large portion of the Protestant churches in this country and in Europe, and which it is a leading object of these pages to recommend to the attention and observance of those who profess to love the Redeemer's kingdom.

This plan of stated union in prayer for the revival of religion, and for the spread of the gospel, was commenced in the Church of Scotland, almost exactly one hundred years ago.

In the month of October, 1744, a number of ministers in Scotland, taking into consideration the state of God's church, and of the world of mankind, "did judge that the Providence of God, at such a day, loudly called such as were concerned for the welfare of Zion to

united and extraordinary supplications to the God of all grace, suitably acknowledging him as the fountain of all spiritual benefits and blessings in his church; and earnestly beseeching him that he would appear in his glory, and favour Zion, and manifest his compassion to the world of mankind by an abundant effusion of his Holy Spirit on all the churches; that he would revive true religion in all parts of Christendom; that he would bless all nations with the light of the gospel, and fill the whole earth with his glory.”

The authors of this plan, after seeking by prayer for divine direction, determined on the following method of carrying it into effect, viz: “To set apart such time on Saturday evening and Sabbath morning, every week, for the purpose before stated, as other duties might allow; and, more solemnly, the first Tuesday of each quarter, (beginning with the first Tuesday of November then next ensuing), either the whole day, or part of the day, as persons might find themselves disposed, or think their circumstances would allow; the time to be spent either in private praying societies, or in public meetings, or alone in secret, as should be found most practicable, or judged most convenient, by such as were

willing to join in this service. It was expressly understood by those who entered into this agreement, that they were not to consider themselves as rigorously bound to the particular days or hours specified, whatever their circumstances at the time might be; nor yet to regard those days as holy, or set apart by divine authority; but that specified seasons should be agreed upon, chiefly for the purpose of guarding against that indolence and forgetfulness to which all are so prone, and securing that concurrence and union in the divine exercise, which are so adapted to warm the heart, and to enlist the social principle in the best of all causes.”

This original agreement was limited to two years. At the expiration of that time it was agreed to continue it for seven years longer. In the mean time, so many praying associations were formed, and such a spirit of prayer for the effusion of the Holy Spirit, was excited and extended in various parts of Scotland, that the friends of religion were more and more satisfied that their agreement was both wise and useful. Nor was this pious union long confined to Scotland. A large body of ministers in New England concurred in the measure, and, among the rest, the ven-

erable Mr. Edwards, then of Northampton, in Massachusetts, afterwards President of the College of New Jersey, and “whose praise is in all the churches,” laboured with no small diligence and zeal to recommend and promote the plan. There is reason to believe that this laudable concert in devotion, though slow in making its way, and though sometimes languishing, has never been wholly abandoned since the original agreement.

In 1784, soon after the close of our revolutionary war, this union in prayer received a new impulse, and commenced a new progress. About this time, also, it received another modification, as to time; being, for the most part, observed only once in each month, viz :
✓ on the evening of the first Monday. One church after another, and one religious denomination after another, not only in the United States, but in various parts of Christendom, fell in with it, until we may safely say,
✓ it now pervades the greater part of the evangelical world. Even in Asia, in Africa, and in the islands of the sea, when the first Monday of each month arrives, the voice of united prayer is heard, ascending to the King of Zion, beseeching him to pour out his Spirit on the nations; to revive his work where the

gospel is enjoyed ; to send it where it is not ; and to hasten the conversion of a fallen world to God.

The General Assembly of our church has not only from time to time given its sanction to this monthly observance, but has, on various occasions, enjoined attention to it, in the most earnest and solemn manner ; and, in the year 1830, observing that many of the churches under its care manifested a diminution of zeal and punctuality in attending upon this service, the Assembly issued a Pastoral Letter, the main object of which was to call the attention of the churches to this important concert in prayer ; to point out some of the mistakes into which many have fallen respecting it ; and to urge renewed and solemn attention to it on the part of all the churches. It is evident, from the language of this letter, that the Assembly regarded this subject as one of deep interest, and that they considered the falling off in its observance of which they complained, as an indication of the spiritual state of the church, deeply to be deplored. So far, then, as the sanction of our beloved church can go in regard to this matter, we have it expressed in all its length and breadth, and in all its deliberate emphasis.

A few years later, our General Assembly, observing that this service was again thinly attended, by many of our congregations, on the evening of a week-day, recommended to such of our churches as might find the change convenient, to attend upon it on the first Sabbath afternoon of every month, for the purpose of securing a more full attendance. Accordingly, in a number of churches, this plan has been adopted. Some other churches, while they yet meet for prayer on the first Monday evening of every month, make the pecuniary collection which belongs to it, on the afternoon of the preceding Sabbath, when larger assemblies are ordinarily in attendance.

Such being the history of that observance which is known to us by the name of the "Monthly Concert in Prayer," let me now, Christian brethren, call your attention to those considerations which ought to recommend it to your serious regard. And here, let me appeal to your judgment and to your hearts, whether it is easy to conceive of a service more reasonable in its character, invested with more interesting and attractive attributes, or more adapted to address itself to the best feelings of the people of God, than this? I am indeed constrained to say, that it has often ap-

peared wonderful to me that, on the monthly returns of this season of united prayer, there should not be more feeling, and more deep interest directed to this solemn service. Were we left to calculate what might be expected from the nature of the case, we should be ready to say, Surely, on the return of this season, at least every member of the church will be found in his seat, uniting in the common supplication. Surely, every one who claims to be a Christian, will be seen bowing before the throne of grace, and pleading for mercy to the church and the world. But is it found in experience to be so? Alas! would that it were! But no; in many cases not half, and in some not a third of the communicants of our churches make their appearance in these exercises of special devotion. A considerable number of those who are never absent from their seats in the ordinary services of the sanctuary on the Lord's day, are seldom seen in the place where special prayer is wont to be made for the revival of religion, and the enlargement of the kingdom of him, whom they profess to regard as the Lord, and the only hope of the world. How shall we account for this melancholy fact? Is the spirit which bears the disciple of Christ to the house

of God on the holy Sabbath, a different spirit from that which he is called upon to exercise at the monthly return of the concert in prayer for the revival of religion, and the spread of the glorious gospel? This will hardly be maintained. How shall we account for it, then, that so many professors of religion, in other respects deemed exemplary, allow themselves habitually to neglect a service which might be expected so strongly and peculiarly to interest every Christian heart? The indication is, undoubtedly, anything but favorable to the Christian character of such individuals. Those who love the Saviour will, infallibly, love his kingdom; and those who sincerely love his kingdom, will, of course, take an interest in its prosperity; will be disposed, in proportion to the sincerity and strength of their affection, to pray for its life and advancement, and to exert themselves, according to their ability, to promote its extension. How then, shall we estimate the spiritual character of those who manifest little or nothing of the interest and the disposition which have been described? They are certainly wanting in one of the best evidences that they belong to the kingdom of Christ. I would solemnly and affectionately entreat all such persons to examine well the

hope which they cherish, that they really belong to the spiritual kingdom of the Redeemer

Let none say, as an excuse for neglecting the monthly service in question, that it is a mere human appointment, and therefore not obligatory on the conscience as are the Christian Sabbath, and the divinely appointed ordinances for that holy day. True, indeed, it is a human appointment in regard to the time of its occurrence; but so are all the lectures and prayer meetings which occur on any of the secular evenings of the week; and so are the special services preparatory to the administration of the Lord's Supper, which are observed without scruple in a large number of Christian churches. But what should we think of any one professing to be a Christian, who should turn his back on these services, however much esteemed and attended upon by his fellow professors, under the pretext that they were not specifically enjoined in the word of God? Surely we should regard such an one as giving miserable evidence of Christian character; and should consider his professed reverence for the word of God and for the services of the Sabbath, as a hypocritical cover for the absence of all spiritual

taste, and of all real concern for the prosperity of the Redeemer's kingdom.

But the plea of not having an express divine warrant for the observance of a particular stated day, at the beginning of every month, to unite in prayer, for the revival of religion, and for the spread of the gospel, is altogether unfounded and delusive. That we are bound by express divine authority, to pray without ceasing for these objects, is abundantly evident from the word of God, in passages either of precept or example almost numberless. That we are bound, not merely to pray in secret, but to unite with our fellow-christians in interceding for the prosperity and enlargement of Zion, is equally evident. How frequently, and at what particular times and places, they shall come together for this purpose, is not, indeed, specifically stated by divine authority, but must be matter of voluntary agreement among those who unite in the service. The great duty of public worship on the first day of the week, may be plainly deduced from the word of God; but how often, and at what hours on that day, the congregations in each place shall assemble, must of necessity be left in each congregation to conventional agreement. But if it be the

duty of Christians to desire and pray that religion may be revived, and the world converted to God; and if it be their duty to unite in praying for these objects; how shall they ever statedly come together without agreeing on some time and place for that purpose? And does this voluntary agreement as to the time and place for the performance of a commanded duty, destroy its character as a duty? Surely, it were unreasonable to suppose this. But when such a union is either formally or tacitly agreed upon, and is afterwards neglected by those who do not really unite in this service in any other social form, or at any other time, is it possible to acquit them of the charge of turning their backs on a plain and obvious Christian obligation?

Suppose a pastor should appoint a prayer meeting to be held on some secular evening of each week, by such of the people of his charge as chose to attend upon it, for promoting the great purposes of devotion and instruction. Meetings of this kind actually exist in most Presbyterian churches in which the spirit of piety has any place. Now suppose some of the members of the church should never make their appearance at these meetings, and should speak against them as

uncommanded will worship. What would be thought of their Christian character? Would even charity herself be able to regard them as exemplary, zealous, healthful Christians? I need not wait for an answer. The public voice, even of the world, would pronounce their example altogether inconsistent with their profession, and utterly unworthy of it.

Bear with me, then, Christian brethren, if I venture to expostulate with those who claim to be the disciples of Christ, and yet are seldom or never seen to attend on this solemn monthly service, observed by the churches with which they claim to be connected. Do you profess really to love the kingdom of the Redeemer? Do you profess to believe that the human race is in a lost and perishing condition; that there is no salvation but in Christ; and that the reception of His religion in this world, is the only method by which men can be made happy here, and happy forever? If you are really sincere in this belief, can you refrain from fervent prayer that the kingdom of Christ may prosper and be gloriously extended? Can you stand aloof, and hold your peace, when thousands around you are uniting their supplications for the spread of the gospel? Can you hear of the people of God

assembling, from month to month, in your neighbourhood, to pray for this object, without feeling an inclination to join them? Can you receive intelligence, from time to time, of the darkness, corruption, and misery, of a large portion of our race, while destitute of the gospel, without having your spirits stirred within you, to pray and labour for their relief? If you can, where is the evidence that you love the Saviour? Where the ground of hope that you have any "part or lot" in his great salvation?

It may, indeed, be sometimes inconvenient to attend on this monthly service, and now and then highly inconvenient; just as a concurrence of adverse circumstances may occasionally render it difficult to reach the house of God on the Lord's day. Where there is little taste for spiritual things, and the prevalence of a cold, worldly spirit, the smallest difficulties are often found to prevent all attendance. But where there is a cordial relish for the service of the sanctuary, and an ardent zeal for the glory of God, and the welfare of perishing men, ordinary hindrances give way, and the desired opportunity is attained and enjoyed. We may apply here, as well as in a multitude of temporal things, the

old proverb, "Where there is a will, there is a way." And where there is a heart which knows any thing of sincere love to Christ, and fervent love for the souls of men, this way will generally be found by those who have bodily health and strength enough to allow of their enjoying the precious privilege.

Let me ask those who are seldom seen at the monthly prayer meeting, how their excuses will appear in a dying hour, and at a judgment seat? I am very sure that many of those causes which are now admitted as an apology for staying at home, or devoting those evenings to mammon or to pleasure, in preference to attending at the place where "prayer is wont to be made," will not be regarded as sufficient, when we come to those honest and solemn seasons which are before us all, and which will "try every man's work of what sort it is." Then, O then, it will be seen, that a want of interest in the service, was the real and chief reason of the absence of multitudes; and that such a service has, indeed, little attraction for those who have no more of what belongs to the Christian, than the venerated name.

Do you forget, my beloved friends, that, in

making it your duty to pray and labour without ceasing for the spread of the gospel, and for the conversion of the world to God, the great Head of the church, is consulting our own good, as well as that of the poor heathen, and of all those destitute portions of our race in behalf of whom we labour and pray? But is it not certainly and demonstrably so? Is not love to God and love to man the sum and substance of all religion? Is not everything which serves to increase and strengthen these affections, conducive to our own peace, to the attainment of higher evidence that we belong to Christ, and, of course, to our solid and permanent scriptural enjoyment? The truth is, the less our hearts are occupied about the Redeemer's kingdom, the less our attention is drawn to it; the less our solicitude for its prosperity and enlargement; the less our sense of the value of the gospel, which will always be proportioned to our sympathy for those who have it not; the less religion, of course, we have, and, consequently, the less our enjoyment of it. Surely, then, those who neglect the stated exercise of which I am speaking, forget their own mercies, and wrong their own souls. They cannot but fail of that spiritual enjoyment which is so truly desira-

ble and precious in itself, and which forms so large a part of that evidence that the grace of God dwells and reigns within us, and is preparing us for that holy and happy kingdom in which “that which is in part shall be done away, and that which is perfect shall come.”

Do you desire, then, Christian brethren, to receive a benefit from time to time in your own souls? There is not a more direct method of making this attainment, than to turn away from all earthly idols to the cause and glory of Christ. Do you wish to enter more deeply than you have ever yet done, into the interest and glory of the Redeemer’s kingdom? Would you feel more for the wants and miseries of your fellow-men, and cherish a stronger desire for the promotion of their temporal and eternal happiness? Then embrace every opportunity of going where the people of God are assembled, to implore a blessing on the church and the world. There, and only there may you expect to feel your hearts warmed with love to your Master in heaven, and with love to his people. There, and there only may you expect the flame of sanctified affection to kindle from heart to heart, and to make your spirits as it were “the chariot of a willing people.” Alas! if the professing

people of God could be made to feel how much spiritual benefit and enjoyment they deprive themselves of, by abstaining from that precious union in prayer for the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom, which has been for so many centuries the practice of millions of the disciples of Christ in every quarter of the globe—nay, if they would lay to heart as they ought, that their neglect of the precious privilege in question, and of similar privileges, is among the causes of their leanness, their spiritual darkness, and their retrogression in the divine life, they would no longer regard this neglect as a small affair in the life of a traveller to the Zion above.

It is common, and it is just to say, that nothing done for Christ is ever lost. But it is equally just to say, that nothing done with a proper spirit for ourselves is ever lost. Every sincere attempt to perform duty, leaves a blessing behind it to the performer. Every throb of gratitude for mercy, as it were, stamps on the soul a new lineament of conformity to God, and imparts a new element of spiritual joy. Every prayer in which we cordially unite with the people of God, gives a new impulse to the spiritual life, and a new ardour to the vital warmth. They who forget the

seasons of prayer, and the assemblies of God's people, shall become "weaker and weaker;" but they who wait on the Lord, shall "renew their strength;" shall "mount up on wings as eagles;" shall run and not be weary; shall walk and not faint."

LETTER II.

Hints as to the best methods of conducting the Monthly Concert.

Christian Brethren: In the preceding letter, on the Monthly Concert in prayer, I have endeavoured to show the importance of that exercise; its value as a means of grace; and how much it is to be lamented that attendance upon it is so much neglected by many professors of religion, belonging to those denominations which acknowledge the general duty of paying respect to it. This neglect was traced to a declining state of religion in the individuals who indulge it, or to erroneous views of the character and claims of the exercise. But it is probable that the entire blame in relation to this matter ought not to be laid at the door of private members of our churches. Do our *Pastors* in all cases conduct this exercise in a manner calculated to attract and interest those who attend upon it? Thin assemblies on the Lord's day, in many of our places of worship, are, doubtless, to be ascribed to the

want of attraction on the part of the officiating ministers. Can it be any marvel, then, if, when the monthly exercise of which we speak fails to secure that large and general attendance which its nature demands, we should feel constrained to lay at least a portion of the blame at the door of pastors, who will not take the pains to engage in it the attention and the hearts of their people? So far from such a supposition being improbable or marvellous, it would seem that nothing can be more natural or consistent with the strictest justice.

When I have gone to the house of God, at the beginning of each month, and have there found assembled three or four dozen hearers, out of, perhaps, three or four hundred communicants; when I have seen every thing wearing the aspect of chilling coldness; the prayers formal, dull, and full of vain and spiritless repetition; the pastor manifesting no zeal, and giving no information respecting the cause of missions, or the advancement of the Redeemer's kingdom; and nothing adapted to enlighten, to warm, or to edify,—I have felt as if it was impossible to wonder that the attendance was so small, or that those who

did attend seemed to look and feel as if they should care but little ever to attend again.

Perhaps one of the greatest faults in such meetings, as now too often conducted, is their continual dull sameness. We are commonly called to unite in a succession of prayers, comprising the same topics, couched in the same or similar terms, and adapted to confine the minds of those who join in them to a narrow field of desires and requests. We justly regard it as one of the advantages which we, as Presbyterians, enjoy, that we are not confined to a liturgy, but are at liberty to enlarge and diversify our plan of social prayer, so as to accommodate it to the various circumstances in which we are placed. There is a love of variety inherent in our nature, which may not be, in all cases, unhal- lowed, and which, undoubtedly, ought to be, to some extent, consulted and gratified. That this principle is not sufficiently remembered and consulted in conducting the monthly concert in prayer, has, no doubt, been often lamented by most of those intelligent Christians who have had frequent opportunities of attending on its exercises. Of course, the introduction of an improvement in these exercises, in this re-

spect, would add materially to their attraction and their usefulness.

Let it be remembered that the objects of prayer contemplated by the original proposers and founders of this monthly service are many, and highly interesting. They are such as these

Giving thanks that, while unnumbered millions of our fellow-men are destitute of the gospel we are favoured with it, in all its fulness and glory ; beseeching that the kingdom of God may come—that every obstacle to the spread of the gospel may be taken out of the way ; that more labourers may be raised up, properly qualified, and sent forth into the great harvest ; that the labourers already in the field may be protected and strengthened, and made to speak boldly as they ought to speak ; and that the word of the Lord proclaimed by them may have free course and be glorified ; that the beloved brethren and sisters who have left homes as dear to them as ours can be, for the sake of bearing the word of life to the benighted pagans, may be inspired with wisdom, and girded with strength, aided in every difficulty, and comforted in all their sorrows ; that the millions throughout the world who have never heard the glad tidings of salva-

tion, may have them preached to them in purity and power; that those who have the direction and management of selecting and sending forth missionaries, and of providing means for their support, may be counselled and guided, and their work crowned with abundant success; in particular, that the Boards of our beloved church, entrusted with the great work of training candidates for the holy ministry, and afterwards sending them forth to the domestic and foreign field of labour, may be enlightened, counselled, and prospered in all their measures; that the schools established among the heathen, and other destitute parts of the world, for training up children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, may be multiplied and greatly prospered; that the Holy Spirit may reach the hearts of young and old among those who are sitting in the region and shadow of death; that those who call themselves Christians may feel their obligations to send the gospel to "every creature" who is destitute of it; that the sleeping church may be roused to a sense of her duty in regard to this great concern; that the triumphs of evangelical truth may be great and glorious wherever it is sent; that the great Lord of the harvest would go with his min-

istering servants wherever they go to preach his blessed gospel ; that the pagan heart may be everywhere enlightened and softened, and the way of the Lord be prepared for the spread of his name among all nations ; that religion may be revived in all our churches ; that wherever the gospel is preached, at home or abroad, it may take a saving effect on the hearts of men ; and that all ends of the earth may see the salvation of God. These are among the great and precious objects of prayer which ought to fill the hearts, and dwell upon the lips of the assembled worshippers at every monthly concert. Here is, surely, matter enough for enlarged, rich, and ever varying petitions. Here are topics sufficient in number, and in immeasurable importance, to occupy the fixed attention and the absorbing desires and zeal of every Christian. Surely, wherever there is a spark of love to the Saviour, or to the souls of men, such objects as these cannot leave an indifferent heart.

Many seem to be under the impression that the principal, if not the exclusive object of the Monthly Concert is to pray for the spread of the gospel among the heathen : that the revival of religion among our churches

at home, and the extension and success of domestic missions, though confessedly of the highest importance, are not intended to be made prominent objects in these monthly exercises. This is an unhappy mistake. Every thing pertaining to the spread of the gospel in its purity and power, both at home and abroad ; the success of this precious message of mercy where it is already proclaimed, and its speedy and effectual diffusion where it is not ; and, in one word, imploring the divine blessing upon every effort for bringing our own land, and all other lands, into subjection to the Spirit of Christ—are all appropriate to this season of prayer, and all, evidently, entered into the plan of those who originally proposed it.

Not that all these topics are to be considered as essentially making a part of every prayer offered up at the monthly concert ; but that the objects contemplated, and the topics of petition employed, on such occasions, are such as have been mentioned, and are, of course, various, grand and interesting in a high degree, and such as may well engage the whole hearts of all who love the Saviour and his cause. Who would not expect that an occasion when such objects as these are

appointed to claim the attention and the prayers of an assembly of Christian men and women, would prove an occasion of peculiar solemnity, and draw to it every heart that had the smallest desire for the glory of God and the happiness of man?

What means, then, ought to be taken by every pastor to render this occasion in the highest degree interesting and profitable, both to himself and to the people of his charge? I answer,—let him, first of all, by meditation and prayer, labour to keep his own mind in a state of lively interest in regard to this great subject. To this end, let him, through the whole of the preceding month, labour to keep awake and on the inquiry for every kind of missionary information adapted to engage, instruct, and edify the Christian people. Let him gather from every channel of public intelligence, every thing bearing on the state of the heathen world, and on the condition of all the dark and destitute places of the earth, whether in our land or elsewhere; every thing adapted to give the people of his charge a distinct and strong impression of the real situation of those who are without a knowledge of the gospel—their blindness, their vices, their misery, and their prospects

for eternity. Let him collect and exhibit, in the most clear and lively manner that he is able, the recent intelligence from the missionary field—the new plans and efforts of missionary associations—the glad tidings of their success, or the mournful information of their failure. Let him be laying up in store, for the whole preceding month, for this solemn occasion. Thus beginning, the moment one such occasion is over, to prepare for another. Let him carefully make a written memorandum of every particular; and be prepared, when the time for the meeting arrives, to make as lively and affecting an exhibition of the whole as possible; not by reading long and tedious articles, as is sometimes injudiciously done, from missionary papers, but by presenting a rapid outline—a condensed synopsis of what has been doing for the whole month, in such a manner as to keep up and reward the attention of an audience for twenty-five minutes, or, at the utmost, half an hour at a time.

How can a minister and his people be expected to feel aright, or to pray aright, if they do not know the state of the missionary field, its wants and its difficulties, as well as the signal blessings, on the one hand, with which

it has pleased the God of grace to favour it, and on the other, the adversities with which he has seen fit, in his sovereign wisdom, to visit it? A pious minister was once observed by a Christian friend, during a period of remarkable public anxiety and trouble, to be peculiarly intent on reading the public papers, secular as well as religious. Upon being asked why he was so much employed in this manner, he replied, "I do it that I may know how to pray." The answer was a wise one. Every line of important information that he read, was an additional guide in imploring those blessings which were needed by the church and by the world.

But while the pastor is careful, in every service of this kind, to give rich information to his audience respecting the state of the missionary field; while he considers and treats this as a primary object of the monthly exercise, let it not be forgotten that prayer forms a prominent and vital part of the whole service. Its name imports no less; and its object is equally decisive in calling for a predominance of that element. Let no plan, then, for its management, be suffered to shut out, or even to abridge the proper amount of prayer. Let there be generally three prayers,

and never less than two. And let there be an endeavour to have these strictly appropriate, from beginning to end. There is often a great lack of this character in the prayers in which we are called to join in the service before us. It is not uncommon to hear those who lead in it employing a large part of their time in common-place topics, in general and extended confession of sin, and in a minute detail of thanksgiving for the common mercies of providence as well as of grace. The consequence is, either that those parts of their prayers which belong to the occasion are crowded into the latter part of the exercise, and hurried over in too hasty and superficial a manner; or that the successive prayers are so inordinately protracted as to become tedious, and to extend the whole service to an inconvenient length. The prayers on such occasions ought seldom, very seldom, to exceed seven or eight minutes each, especially when there are more than two. And I know of no better method of securing the proper brevity in our social prayers, than that of charging ourselves to be strictly appropriate to the occasion, from the first sentence. If this plan were adopted, we should be better able to judge of the length of our own pray-

ers, and be much more seldom led away by those endless repetitions and wanderings of request, which, though good and edifying in themselves, do not properly belong to the occasion. How much more suitable and happy, when all the prayers are truly appropriate; and when, (as all that is appropriate cannot be comprised in any one prayer,) those who succeed each other are careful to take up and present what those who went before omitted, so as to exhibit something like a comprehensive view of all the subjects of petition that ought to be brought forward in the whole exercise.

And here it may not be improper to suggest what I have often thought worthy of more consideration than it has commonly received. No one can be more friendly to the practice of inviting the lay members of our churches to take the lead in social prayer than the writer of these lines. Such a practice is adapted to diffuse a spirit of prayer more widely in the church, and to cause a spirit of more active zeal in conducting the affairs of the Redeemer's kingdom, to take a firmer hold of the professors of religion than they would be apt otherwise to possess. There is much in the principle of employing men in

the service of Zion—giving them something to do, if we would engage them to take a deep and practical interest in her affairs. But there can be no doubt that this has been sometimes done prematurely and unwisely. In some congregations it is not unusual to call upon young and inexperienced converts to take the lead in prayer, in social meetings, in less than a week, sometimes even in forty-eight hours after they have been hopefully brought into the kingdom of grace. This is neither prudent nor safe. It is introducing into the place of a leader and guide in sacred things, one whose knowledge is small and crude, who has no suitable experience, and who may give utterance to that which is not “good to the use of edifying.” And if it be not productive of this painful effect, it may result in injury to the individual himself; it may become the means of “puffing up” a “novice” so soon called into public view.

That the intelligent and warm-hearted converts to experimental religion among the laity ought, as before stated, to be trained gradually and discreetly to the work of leading in social prayer, there can be no doubt. But let a moderate and reasonable time elapse, after they are united to the church, before they are

called upon to take a part in this service. Let them not be called so publicly into the view of the religious community, until their religious knowledge is more mature, and their new character, as professors of religion, better known and established. And even then, let them be first called upon for this service in the smaller and more private meetings for prayer, that they may, by little and little, gain the confidence and self-possession, and form the habit necessary to an edifying performance of such a duty.

It has appeared to the writer of these lines that frequently by far too little sound discretion is exercised in selecting persons to lead in prayer in the monthly exercises now under consideration. In an exercise so important to the interests of religion, on which so much depends, and in regard to which every effort ought to be made to conduct it in an impressive and edifying manner, surely those who are not qualified thus to appear, who have little either of the gift or the spirit of prayer, ought to be invited to take a leading part as seldom as possible. The object of inviting any to take such a part is, not to pay a compliment, not to minister to personal vanity, but to edify the church of God, to promote

that great cause which the whole service is intended to subserve—the diffusion of a spirit of love to the Redeemer, and of zeal for the extension of his kingdom throughout the world. Can it be necessary to employ argument to prove that every instrumentality employed on such an occasion, when a portion of the worldly as well as of the pious may be assembled, ought to be well adapted to answer its great end? It is true, indeed, that, with respect to all the means which we use, our sole reliance ought to be on the power of the Holy Spirit, vouchsafed to render them effectual; still, in spiritual, as in temporal things, “wisdom is profitable to direct,” and our constant aim ought to be, as far as possible, to make use of those means only which are adapted to promote the great purpose in view.

From all that has been said, it is easy to see what a weight of responsibility rests on every pastor in conducting this monthly service in such a manner as shall tend most effectually to answer its great end. What a precious opportunity it affords for calling the attention of his flock, twelve times a year, to the great duty and the appointed means of converting the world to God; keeping them constantly

and faithfully informed of the state and the wants of the missionary field ; leading them to the throne of grace to implore a blessing on that field ; and stirring them up, by all the means of argument, expostulation and entreaty in his power, to a faithful discharge of their duty in causing the gospel to be sent to every creature.

Perhaps it will be said, that if the monthly prayer meeting be a matter of so much consequence, if it bring with it so much duty, and ought to be prepared for with so much care ; then, instead of being regarded, as it too often is, as a sort of bye-business, which may be dispatched without material preparation, it must in reality prove one of the most laborious services in the whole month. This consequence is not denied. It ought indeed to be so regarded, and every effort made to render it the most instructive, the most thrilling, the most solemn exercise during the month. And can any faithful pastor, any one who loves his Master in heaven and the souls of men, be unwilling to meet such an exercise, and to make all the preparation for it in his power ? Can any service, during any ordinary month, be more precious, or more wor-

thy of employing all the time, and all the labour which can be bestowed upon it?

The complaint, that the monthly prayer meeting is not well attended in most of our churches, is, as before observed, an old complaint, and I would that we could say it is not well founded. In many cases, not one half, nay, sometimes not one quarter part, even of the communicants are present; and, in general, very few indeed of those who are not church members, ever think of attending, unless it takes place in the afternoon of the Lord's day. And, in truth, this was probably the main reason for the recommendation issued by our General Assembly a few years since, to transfer the observance from the evening of the first Monday of each month, to the afternoon of the first Sabbath. Until this transfer was adopted, only a small portion of our congregations were usually present at this service, and of course only a small part contributed to the pecuniary collection commonly made in connection with the service. But is it probable that, if the service itself were made what it ought to be, if indefatigable pains were taken to render it the most instructive, interesting and deeply exciting service in the whole month, that it

would be thus neglected? There would be no risk in answering this question with the most decisive negative. No, the moment it ceased to be the heavy, monotonous, common-place exercise which we too commonly find it, it would draw the earnest attention, and the full assembly which generally follow ministrations of an elevated character. If every member of each congregation were taught by experience to expect to find this service rich in information, animating in Christian duty, and in every respect adapted to promote Christian edification, can any one doubt that it would be well attended? The writer of these lines would be very far from encouraging in any minister of the gospel the indulgence of a spirit of indolence for a moment, in any service; but he would say, with deliberate solemnity, if such a spirit be ever indulged, let it not be at the monthly concert in prayer, when his own soul, and the souls of all who hear him, ought to be led out of themselves to the largest concern for the kingdom of the Redeemer; when the desolations of fallen man rise in solemn array before his mind; when the wants and miseries of our lost world ought, with concentrated and unusual force, to move every heart; and when

every feeling of love to the Master who died for us, and to the souls of perishing men, ought to fill the heart of every listening attendant with peculiar and unwonted sympathy, and the most fervent zeal for sending to them the only cure for their misery.

Nor is it difficult, in a variety of ways, to draw the special attention of a Christian flock to this monthly service. Let not only a specific notice of it be given on the preceding Sabbath, if it be observed on Monday evening, or in the morning of the day, if observed on Sabbath afternoon; but let the notice be couched in such language, accompanied with a sentence or two of such brief and comprehensive remarks, and preceded or followed by such pointed prayers as may be adapted to rouse the attention, and, in some measure, touch the feelings of every hearer.

Let the pastor encourage all who attend on this service to bring their children with them. Is it not desirable that our children, from their earliest years, should be habituated to the company and the language of prayer, and that they should be accustomed to the work of contributing something of their little savings for the benefit of those who are "perishing for lack of vision?" If we ever ex-

pect them to feel right on this subject, we cannot begin too early to imbue their minds with benevolent sentiments, and to teach them to feel what it will be their duty to practice when they reach mature age. O how large a portion of Christian parents are deplorably delinquent in this, one of the primary elements of Christian education—leading their children to a throne of grace, and to the house of God, and leading them also early, by the united force of precept and example, to remember that, young as they are, they are debtors, deep debtors, to the kingdom of that Saviour in whose name they have been baptized.

When shall we have monthly concerts conducted in the spirit of these suggestions? When shall we see them bearing a character which shall warm the pastor's own heart, draw around him the mass of his stated hearers, as well as of his church members, and constitute a little monthly era among his people? When that period shall arrive, it will mark a season of prosperity and joy in the church. It will be both the effect and the cause of better days, and will mark the purpose of our covenant God to have mercy on Zion. Come, Lord Jesus, O come quickly, thus to bless our half awake and struggling church!

LETTER III.

The duty of connecting Contributions with Prayer.

Christian Brethren : As the Monthly Prayer Meeting is an observance devoted to the great interests of the revival of religion, the spread of the gospel, and the conversion of the world to God, it must, of course, be considered as standing in close connection with every thing that is necessary to the great work of evangelizing the population of our globe, and preaching the gospel to every creature. Among these it is evident that contributions for sustaining the expense of missions must ever be comprehended. This accompaniment of the exercise, is, by many churches, wholly omitted. This omission, however, ought never to be allowed. Prayer and alms ought ever to go together. . When we assemble to implore a blessing on the means employed for sending the gospel to the dark and destitute nations, what can be more obvious and reasonable than the duty of furnishing our proportion of the means for carrying on

a work at once so expensive and so precious?

We sometimes hear surprise expressed, even by some of our pious people, that so much is said at our monthly prayer meetings about money; that we scarcely ever pass such a meeting without hearing the duty of contributions at least hinted at, if not urgently pressed. But does not this surprise result from the want of consideration? Is any Christian man, however heavenly-minded—however weaned from the world, able to live himself, or to feed and clothe his family without expense? If the pagans knew the value of the gospel, they would be willing to sustain and even liberally to compensate those who carry it to them. But they do not know its value, and of course, those who bear to them the bread of life, must be sustained by those who send them. And is this to be done without funds; and if the number sent be considerable, without large funds? Can missionaries and their families live upon air? Or can we expect them to be supported by miracle? We do not expect our own families to be sustained without money, and we are willing to bestow it for their comfort. Ought we not to be quite as willing, nay,

more cordially zealous in aiding to support families who are devoting their time, and all their powers to the advancement of the kingdom of Christ? What strange forgetfulness and want of practical consideration blind the minds, and affect the judgment of thousands who seldom fail of judging correctly where their supposed interest is not concerned! Alas! that the children of this world are apt to be so much wiser and more considerate in their generation than the children of light!

I am quite sensible that the subject of pecuniary contributions may be made too prominent at our monthly prayer meetings. They may be insisted upon with a frequency, and held up in a light which may make them appear to some as the great thing in the spread of the gospel; and to lead our people to forget that all the money in the world could not, of itself, convert one soul. This is an unhappy and mischievous extreme. But on the other hand, all the prayers in the world, if alone, will not, cannot extend the cause of Christ in the world, unless God can deny himself.

If we examine the annual statistical reports of our church, the mortifying and wonderful fact is disclosed, that nearly, if not quite

one half of our congregations contribute nothing, absolutely nothing to the treasury of the Board of Foreign Missions; and quite as many, if not more, who contribute nothing to Domestic Missions. How many of these churches pay any attention to the monthly prayer meeting, is altogether unknown to the present writer. How much they may pray, either in public or private, for the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom, no ecclesiastical records within reach manifest. But, surely, they give little evidence that their hearts are in these prayers, even if regularly offered up, when so little practical fruit of love and zeal is permitted to appear. This is what the spirit of inspiration calls "loving in word only, and not in deed and in truth." We contended, for a long time, and against much opposition, for the privilege and the opportunity of conducting Foreign Missions, as a church. Now that we have gained our object, shall we give occasion to the religious public to suppose that we were more anxious to gain the victory over opposers, than to be empowered to perform the great work for which we professed to contend? Surely the history of the conflict by which, under the blessing of God, we attained the position

which we now occupy, is deeply interesting, and greatly increases our responsibility. Our opposers in that conflict, predicted, that it would be found that we had neither life nor zeal enough to carry on to any advantage the work which we undertook. How unhappy if this prediction should be verified! Surely every consideration of worldly consistency, as well as of sanctified principle, calls upon us to arise in all the strength that God may give us, and to pursue in good earnest the object which we profess to love, and which we have solicited the power of pursuing.

It is not uncommon, indeed, to hear the remark, that some congregations are so small and so poor as to be scarcely able to support a pastor; and that such ought not to be called upon or expected to contribute to the missionary treasury. This doctrine, I am bold to say, has no foundation or countenance in the word of God. No church was ever so feeble or impoverished as to make it improper to call upon its members to contribute to the cause of missions. If I were asked how a church, however small or poor, would be most likely to rise and grow; what would be the surest means of attaining edification and

strength, I would say with confidence—Let it begin in good earnest to pray and exert itself for sending the gospel to the benighted and perishing. However small its strength, let it rouse that little, such as it is, and engage with fervent prayer, and with heartfelt love for souls, in contributing to the Lord's treasury, and the very effort would tend to enlarge and build it up. A small church, or a sickly Christian, may fitly be compared to an individual long enfeebled by disease, who is beginning, in the commencement of convalescence, to employ muscular effort in exercise in the open air. Every effort adds to his strength. He may be so feeble as to feel as if he could scarcely move a limb; but every movement is salutary and invigorating. So that instead of saying, his weakness forbids him to take exercise; he may rather say, that he cannot regain his health without it. In like manner, a small and feeble church, instead of being able with propriety to say—“We cannot afford to give alms with our prayers for the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom,”—ought rather to say—“We cannot afford to live without doing something as well as praying for the salvation of the benighted and perishing.” There is no case in

regard to which the proverb of the wise man is more applicable than here—"There is that withholdeth, but it tendeth to poverty."

Nay, if I were a pastor, and were engaged in collecting the contributions of Christian liberality toward the missionary cause, I should never think of passing the door even of a pauper, whose whole support was derived from the charity of the church. If, indeed, I were soliciting donations for completing the salary of the pastor, or for repairing or rebuilding the house of worship, I should never think of applying to such for aid; but if the object were to send the gospel to the poor and perishing, as an accompaniment of prayer on their behalf, I would not deny, even to the poorest, the opportunity of contributing their cent or half cent per month, which, if they had a proper spirit, would be regarded as a precious privilege, and which, when pious wishes and prayers went along, would be accounted, in the sight of the great Searcher of hearts, a more truly acceptable offering than thousands of gold and silver from the overflowing abundance of the rich. There was no scruple, of old, in receiving the contributions of the indigent. The poor widow commended by our Lord, who cast "two

mites which make a farthing," into the Lord's treasury, is represented as having cast in more, in the divine estimation, than all the other contributors, however liberal. A pious, but deeply indigent widow, in our own day, in handing her sixpence to the collection for the missionary fund, said, with a starting tear—"This is all I have to give; but I give it with my whole heart, and am desirous it should go, with my hearty prayers, to the poor heathen." Was it wrong to receive this pittance from her hands? Surely not; unless it be right to turn away from the cordial offering, and the fervent prayers of Christian love, which in the sight of God are of great price.

There are those who are heard to complain, that collections taken up every month, for the support of missions, are too frequent; and especially when taken in connection with the contributions for other purposes, called for at intermediate seasons. Surely such complainers have read the records of the people of God, at different periods of the church's history, with little profit. Under the Old Testament economy, every member of the Jewish commonwealth was required to pay two tithes, or one-fifth part of all his income, for the support of the ministers of

religion, and the expense of the daily sacrifices. And, indeed, little, if any less than one-half of each individual's income was required to meet all the demands which arose under the theocracy. What would be thought of requiring such a proportion of income for the support and spread of the gospel now? And yet that amount of contribution was fixed by infinite Wisdom, who perfectly understood what was reasonable and for the good of the people. Let us also call to mind the large and almost boundless charities of the early Christians. The system of tithes was done away when Christ came. No specific assessment was proclaimed by his inspired teachers. The "law of love" seems to have been made the rule for its almost limitless liberality. Let the advocates of modern parsimony read the record of their contributions and sacrifices, and be ashamed of their narrow calculations. Think how they braved dangers and denied themselves, and poured out their property and even their blood, "like water," for spreading the gospel. Yes, amidst all the poverty, and privations, and persecutions under which they laboured, they brought offerings for sending the gospel of salvation to others, truly wonderful in the amount.

Nay, they not only gave their substance—sometimes to the last farthing—to this object; but they counted not their lives too dear to be made an offering for the promotion of the Redeemer's kingdom and glory. In short, for several centuries after the resurrection of Christ, they devoted themselves to the support of the missionary cause with a universality, and to an extent, to which, as far as I know, there is now no parallel. Let the professing believers in Christ of the present day read this record, and then say, whether those who talk of giving only what is "convenient" for the spread of the gospel, nay, who appear to grudge the sacrifice even of the smallest luxury, either in unnecessary dress, or in injurious feasting, can be considered as belonging to the same body, or as animated with the same spirit, with those primitive disciples.

I know one church (not in our connection) by no means wealthy, which has long been in the habit of contributing fifty dollars, every month, for the support of missions, besides all other claims for the work of benevolence. I am acquainted with another church, also of medium character as to wealth, and I am sorry to say, not belonging to our body, which

never fails to raise one hundred dollars every month for the same cause, in addition to large liberality toward other objects of charity. Happy should we be if a similar spirit pervaded our churches! If all the members of our churches could be prevailed upon each to contribute twenty-five cents at every monthly prayer meeting, or even half that sum, in addition to the aid which hundreds, not members, would be ready cheerfully to give—the Boards to whom we have entrusted the missionary work, would have a great sufficiency for carrying into execution all their wise plans. But how distressing to know that even this pittance is more than the great majority of our members can be prevailed upon to give; and that many even of those who profess to come together to pray for the spread of the gospel, while in their addresses to the throne of grace they say to the heathen, Be ye warmed and filled, yet contribute nothing toward sending to them the bread and the water of life.

Let every professing Christian be asked—Does any month in the whole year pass without bringing many mercies to you and yours? Health, reason, food and raiment, domestic comforts, and above all, the privileges of the

gospel, are among the number which unceasingly call for a grateful acknowledgment and return. Do you owe nothing to the King of Zion for these mercies? Do you owe nothing for your Bibles, your Sabbaths, your open sanctuaries, your sacramental tables, and all the humanizing, regulating and sanctifying effects which these things are constantly diffusing around you? You are not slow to confess that all these institutions exert an influence to make your children more orderly, your families happier, and the whole aspect of society more regular and blessed. Can we recognize and acknowledge these mercies, and yet feel no disposition to make the smallest grateful offering for promoting the glory of him who is the Author of them all?

When the monthly prayer meeting returns, have you the heart, O Christian, to turn your back upon it; and, if you go, to grudge at least a few cents as a thank offering to God, and for imparting the same privileges which you enjoy to those who are perishing for lack of them? Think—think again of your own mercies; and then if you can trample on the obligations which bind you to plan and provide, as well as pray, for the temporal and eternal welfare of those who are destitute of

these mercies, how can you dare claim to be the disciples of him who has said—"It is more blessed to give than to receive," and who came to "seek and save that which was lost?"

We cannot reasonably expect every one who is friendly to the cause of missions to be present at every monthly prayer meeting. Bad weather—sickness—domestic cares—and many events, incapable of being specified, alas! perhaps, at some times, even spiritual indifference, will keep some at home. But there is no need that obstacles of this kind should prevent any one from forwarding his monthly contribution. He may send it by a son, or daughter, or neighbour. And if, for the accomplishment of this object, he should employ one who has no taste for attending, and who is not accustomed to be there, he may be the means of putting a beloved friend, without seeming to design it, in the way of receiving the richest of all blessings; a new heart and a right spirit—an introduction to that kingdom which is "not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."

Are any ready to ask, How much is it the duty of each one, on the return of this

monthly service, to give for the great purpose of spreading the gospel? “It has been frequently wished by Christians,” says the excellent Dr. Payson, “that there were some rule laid down in the Bible, fixing the proportion of their property which they ought to contribute to religious uses. This is as if a child should go to his father, and say, “Father, how many times in the day must I come to you with some testimonial of my love? How often will it be necessary to show my affection for you?”” The father would, of course, reply—“Just as often as your feelings prompt you, my child, and no oftener.” Just so Christ says to his people—“Look at me, and see what I have done and suffered for you, and then give me just what you think I deserve. I do not wish any thing forced.”*

Perhaps a better answer could not be given, when addressed to a gracious and truly grateful heart. But alas! how inadequate a rule, when presented to the mass of Christian professors! If present inclination were the only guide, what stunted and miserable results would, in a multitude of cases, appear! An indication of the divine will still more definite and intelligible to all must be summoned to

* Payson's Memoirs, p. 381.

our aid. True, the demand of a tenth part of our income, as before stated, is no longer in force, in so many words, under the New Testament economy. And yet, can any one read the New Testament without perceiving that all this, and even more, is virtually demanded—that, as the Christian dispensation is one of more light, less servility, and much larger privilege, so it brings with it more extended obligations, and offers excitements to spiritual enterprise and usefulness incomparably greater? I should say, that every Christian, if he duly contemplated his privileges and his obligation, would feel himself bound to go beyond rather than fall short of that which was binding under the system of tithes. Under this system, the pious Jew, in the scope of his benevolence, was confined to the limits of his own nation. It appeared to be the will of God that, up to the coming of the Messiah in the flesh, a single nation only should be the depositary of his truth, and the conservators of his laws. But now, the Christian, with a vast enlargement of his own mercies, privileges, and hopes, beholds a WORLD lying in sin and misery before him, to every part of which he is commanded, as far as his ability extends, to send the glorious

gospel. Will not every enlightened believer, in these enlarged circumstances, feel himself called upon for greatly enlarged desires, efforts, and contributions for the relief of a dying world, committed as it were, to the care of each member of the Master's body; and for the extension of the kingdom and glory of that Master?

The relations and responsibilities of different persons under the gospel, are such, that no general rule for giving to the cause of Christ can be laid down as equally applicable to all. Those who have no children or immediate dependents, and those who have large families entirely dependent on them, though they must be governed by the same great principles, are not, undoubtedly, to be regulated by the same measure of liberality. All, indeed, whatever their situation may be, are to consider themselves with all they possess, as dedicated to Christ, as bound to make his will the sovereign guide of their conduct, as his glory is the great end of all their actions. But the same will does not dictate an equal amount of giving to all. Some, like the Apostle Peter, have nothing to give save that which is brought to their hands in an extraordinary manner (Matt. xvii. 27); while

others, like Zaccheus, are rich, and have a large store on which to draw for relieving the wants of the poor, and supplying the exigencies of the church. Where there is much wealth, and, at the same time, any thing like that ardent love to the Saviour, and that deep sense of obligation to him which ought to fill every Christian heart, the professor will hold all that he has, consecrated to God, and to be disposed of in such a manner as he verily believes will be most for the glory of God, and the advancement of the Redeemer's kingdom. Mr. Nathaniel Ripley Cobb, a pious merchant of Boston some years ago, made, with solemnity, the following covenant with God, that he might supremely honour him who had brought peace to his soul. "Resolved, 1. That by the grace of God, I will never be worth more than fifty thousand dollars. 2. That, by the grace of God, I will give one-fourth of all the profits of my business to charitable and religious uses. 3. If I am ever worth twenty thousand dollars, I will give one-half of my net profits. 4. If I am ever worth thirty thousand dollars, I will give three-fourths of my profits, and the whole above fifty thousand. So help me God! or give the property to a more faithful steward,

and set me aside." It was in the year 1821, that Mr. Cobb drew up this solemn vow, and began to act upon it. And he continued, till the time of his death, most scrupulously to fulfil all its terms. The fixed sum which he had devoted to Christ was disbursed with as much regularity, from year to year, as any tradesman's bill; and though he, at times, exceeded it, he never would suffer it to be in the least degree curtailed. Finding that he had realized, in one year, seven thousand dollars beyond his stipulated maximum, he immediately laid out the surplus in commencing the foundation of a Professorship in a public institution.

I am far, my Christian brethren, from saying that this example ought to be followed by every professing Christian engaged in prosperous business. Some ought not to do so much, and others even more. If there be really and habitually reigning in the heart a sincere love to the Saviour as the life and hope of the soul, and a supreme regard to the enlargement and prosperity of his kingdom, there will be little difficulty in determining how much of our possessions ought to be devoted to the glory of Him, to whom we owe life and health, and all our temporal comforts,

and to crown all, the sum total of our hopes of eternal blessedness.

What shall we say, then, to the man whose possessions amount not merely to the sum which this pious man assigned as the maximum of his estate, but to ten or even twenty times as much, and who is every year adding thousands to his accumulation; and who considers it as quite enough for him to pay his parent, and perhaps as much more, toward all the diversified objects which demand Christian liberality. To all the claims of worldly grandeur and worldly pleasure, however large, he responds with a willing mind; perhaps with a spirit of ostentatious profusion; but to the claims of the Redeemer's kingdom, his responses are habitually reluctant and sparing. Even worldly men see and acknowledge that such an example is altogether unworthy of the Christian name.

When the professing Christian, then, persists in the great work of accumulating property, at the expense of denying what he owes to the kingdom of Christ, he may congratulate himself that he shall die rich; but it is no abuse of language to say, that, upon Christian principles, he will die most sinfully rich.

Beloved reader ! for what purpose are you so intent on laying up property, and so reluctant to devote even a moderate portion of it to the kingdom and glory of God ? Is it that you may leave your children wealthy, luxurious, swallowed up in worldly indulgences, and raised above the necessity of exercising and exerting their own talents ! O how many parents have starved and jeoparded their own souls, for the sake of laying up and leaving large fortunes, which, when made, have proved a temptation to their children, and their destruction for this world as well as that which is to come !

Each individual Christian, then, must of necessity be left to himself to decide how much he will contribute, from year to year, towards sustaining the church in her efforts to convert the world to God. It is in this case as in a multitude of others. The precise path of duty cannot be prescribed to each individual in every case without encroaching on the province of miracle. It is plainly made our duty by the word of God to "visit the fatherless and the widows in their affliction ;" but how much of our time shall be devoted to this object must, of course, be left for each one of us to judge for himself ; and it is evi-

dent that the same portion of time is not, and cannot be, required of all. Again ; it is the duty of all to spend a portion of every day in prayer and reading the Scriptures. But how many hours of each day ought to be thus spent, must, of course, be left to the occupation and the circumstances of each person. Some ought, undoubtedly, to spend more time thus than others. In like manner, what shall be the annual amount of the contributions of each one who calls himself a Christian to the cause of religion, must be left to his own conscience. No other mortal has a right to decide it for him. But is there no other tribunal where his decisions on this subject are to be reviewed, and, if erroneous, condemned? Certainly there is ; and therefore, the parsimonious giver, and he who refuses to give, under the impression that he is left at liberty by the Head of the church to judge for himself, are placed, in the new economy, in circumstances of responsibility which they too often forget. There is such a thing, O professing Christian ! as robbing God under the New Testament dispensation as really as under the Old. The difference is, that now the duty of paying what he demands is not fenced round with the same rigour of servili-

ty as it once was ; but that delinquency is attended with more resistance of light and mercy, and is, of course, likely to be visited with a severer penalty.

The great subject, then, of which we speak is by no means left in that indefinite posture in the word of God, which many imagine. When, therefore, he who is in the receipt of a comfortable income for the support of his family, is reluctant, and thinks it hard to devote a tenth—or a twentieth—nay, even a thirtieth of his revenues for the spread of the gospel:—when he who is master of great wealth, and lives in the enjoyment of every luxury, is unwilling to lop off any portion of his vain show, or to abridge a single luxury, for the sake of promoting the kingdom of him who gives him all that he enjoys, and to whom he professes to be indebted for every hope: when he who, on the recurrence of hard times, which call upon him to retrench—begins retrenchment first with his God;—these individuals, and many like them, may confidently call themselves Christians, and may imagine that there is none to review and set aside their judgment. Of their fellow-men, indeed, there is none. No man, or body of men has a right to say to such an one—

“Why doest thou so?” But there is ONE who has this right, and who will assuredly exercise it. The God who made us, and who has given us all our possessions, has declared, that we are not our own; that we ourselves, and all we possess, are his property; that we are bound to “seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness;” that the love of Christ ought ever to “constrain us to live not unto ourselves, but to him who died for us, and rose again;” and that “holiness to the Lord” ought to be inscribed upon every article of our property, as well as upon every affection of our hearts. This is the law of Christ—not of the ceremonial economy—but of his New Testament kingdom; and he will hold us to it. If we entirely reject this law, it only shows that, whatever name we may bear, we have no part nor lot in his salvation. But if we acknowledge and desire to be governed by it, and yet frequently altogether lose sight of it, the probability is, that judgments in kind will be sent upon us for our correction. There is reason to believe that many a man who has refused to answer the claims of his heavenly Benefactor, has had that taken away from him which he thought to lay up. A venerable minister of

the Church of England, long since deceased, used to say—with as much justice as precision—“ Let me proportion my giving to my income, or God will proportion my income to my giving.” The late John Thornton, of London, of the same church, so eminent for his religious charities, on hearing of the loss of one of his ships, by which many thousand pounds were unexpectedly taken from him—said—“ It is because I have lately given less than I ought to the Redeemer’s kingdom ; I must give more while I have it to give.” But what is more conclusive still, the Spirit of God, speaking by the prophet Haggai, teaches the same doctrine. Remonstrating with those in his day, who neglected the building of God’s house for the sake of attending to their own houses, he says :—“ Ye have sown much, and bring in little ; and he that earneth wages, earneth them to put into a bag with holes. Ye looked for much, and lo it came to little ; and when ye brought it home, I did blow upon it. Why ? saith the Lord of hosts. Because of mine house that is waste ; and ye run every man to his own house. Therefore the heaven over you is stayed from dew, and the earth is stayed from her fruit—and I called for a drought upon the

land, and upon the corn, and upon the oil, and upon that which the ground bringeth forth, and upon all the labour of your hands.”—Haggai, i. 6, 9. Ah! God is the most fearful of all creditors. We may defraud other creditors, and they may have no remedy; but when we are deaf to the claims of Omnipotence, we forget our own mercies, and are in Hands from which there is no escape.

There is wisdom as well as convenience in stated, systematic giving. An inspired Apostle enjoined on the Christians of his day to lay aside something on the first day of each week—something for the Lord’s treasury; and the measure of their contribution which he assigned was—“according as the Lord had prospered them.” Most people give at random; without calculation; without a plan. This is attended with multiplied evils. Whereas, if the Christian, under a deep sense of his obligation to that God who has given him all that he possesses, deliberately settles in his own mind what he ought to give to the Redeemer’s kingdom, and conscientiously lays it by as a sacred deposit;—he will know how much he gives, which many, for the want of this arrangement, greatly mistake. He will come to this fund, when each successive ap-

plication is made, and take out of it without a prejudice and without a grudge. He will no longer be harsh to those who crave his liberality. He will not be so ingenious, and so much on the alert as many now are, to evade an appeal. He will allow to every case which presents, the amount of support which it seems to demand; and he will meet the claim, not with reluctance or with frowns, but with the promptitude and cheerfulness becoming a Christian giver. How sweet the privilege of, every week or month, devoting something to the kingdom and glory of him to whom we are indebted for all we enjoy, and all we hope for!

Oh, if our monthly prayer meetings were strongly marked with this spirit; if we came to them with hearts filled with love to the Saviour and his cause; if, while we pray in word that “the heathen may be given to him for an inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for a possession”—our whole souls sincerely responded to our petitions, we might expect to see the Lord’s treasury filled to overflowing, and a blessing poured out upon all our churches, until there should be no more room to receive it.

LETTER IV.

Concluding remarks—Appeals and Exhortation.

Christian Brethren: Having, in former numbers, briefly traced the history of the monthly Concert in Prayer, and endeavoured to show the duty and importance of attending upon it; and having made some suggestions respecting the best method of conducting the exercise, and the obligation to accompany every season of prayer for the conversion of the world with contributions for carrying on the work; it only remains that I close with some serious exhortations to fidelity and perseverance in this important duty.

We are now prepared to reflect on what has been said, and to make the whole matter of serious consideration and of practical appeal.

Is it so, then, that the children of men without the gospel, are in a state of deplorable destitution and misery; deprived of the best and only effectual means of temporal comfort, and without hope for eternity? Is it so,

that we are all bound to feel for those who are in this situation, and to pray for them; and that, if we have no heart to do this, we can have no scriptural evidence that we are Christians? Is it so, that it is in the power of the members of the Presbyterian church to send this glorious gospel to millions, both in our own country, and foreign lands, who have it not; and that, notwithstanding this, only a small portion of them have ever made any serious effort to fulfil this important duty? Is it true, that, in a majority of our congregations, ministers, and elders, and deacons, and people, after every exhortation and entreaty to the contrary, are still slumbering over this delinquency; that our prayer meetings for the revival of religion, and the conversion of the world, are thin and cold; and that our Boards of Domestic and Foreign Missions, are left to struggle with all the embarrassments arising from stinted means, and restricted plans of action? And is it also true, that all this has been stated, and again and again proclaimed to the church, in all her length and breadth, without exciting any thing like a general and cordial response, and still leaving a large part of our nominal body to all appearance indifferent and inactive in regard to these high

claims, which address themselves so solemnly to every Christian feeling ?

That there is a distressing lack of interest in this great subject on the part of multitudes among us who bear the Christian name, can be doubted by none who have eyes to see, and ears to hear. To what are we to ascribe this deplorable delinquency ? Not, surely, to the want of importance and of interest in the great object recommended ; for it is, beyond all comparison, the most solemnly important, and the most interesting object that can be presented to a thinking mind. There can be none greater ; none more adapted to rouse the attention and captivate all the sensibilities of the Christian's heart. The temporal and eternal welfare of unnumbered millions of men—the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom—and the glory of the eternal God—can any objects be greater than these, or more worthy of our supreme regard ? Neither does our deplorable delinquency in regard to this object arise from ignorance of our duty ; for it has been set before us, explained, and pressed upon our consciences with a frequency, a clearness, and a force which leave no individual among us who has been willing to be informed, at a loss to understand what

the Lord would have him to do. Nor yet, again, does the lack of zeal and effort on this subject arise from want of power to discharge the duty in question; for we have abundant time, and means, and power, for attending to far inferior objects. Nor yet, once more, can we plead that the discharge of the duty in question is not accompanied with an appropriate and encouraging reward; for, when discharged from proper motives, and with a proper spirit, there is no work in which a rational creature can engage with sweeter enjoyment, and of which the performance as well as the retrospect is productive of richer or more abundant fruits.

To what, then, are we to ascribe the delinquency in question, so disreputable to our character as a church, and so distressing to all who take a cordial interest in the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom? Must we be driven to the mortifying conclusion that the melancholy fact indicates that religion is at a low ebb in our beloved Zion; that the greater part of those who externally belong to our communion, have only a nominal attachment to the great cause which they profess to love; and that the great work of spreading the knowledge of the gospel holds

a place in their affections far below that which relates to the gains and honours of the world? Surely from a state so deplorable and criminal as this, every one who is concerned for his present peace or his eternal welfare, would wish to be roused.

Permit me, then, in the name, and in the fear of the Lord, to reason with those who lay claim, in any sense, or in any degree, to the Christian character, and are yet conscious that they are, in any measure chargeable with this delinquency

My dear friends, can any thinking person doubt that the situation of those who are without the gospel, whether in heathen lands, or in lands nominally Christian, is a situation truly deplorable, and attended with circumstances in the highest degree unfriendly to their present enjoyment, and still more fatal to their eternal welfare? Can any one doubt that for rational, immortal and accountable creatures to be placed in circumstances in which they can know nothing of the Bible; nothing of the means of grace; nothing of those principles and teachers which lead men to present happiness and to eternal salvation,—is, of all situations on this side the abyss of perdition, the most perilous and gloomy?

Can any doubt that the gospel is the greatest, richest, best treasure that can possibly be sent to any portion of our ruined race that is destitute of it? Can any really doubt that it is the duty of the church of Christ, as such, to take effectual measures for sending this gospel, far and wide, in all its purity and power, to those who have it not? And if this be the duty of the church, as a living, active body, does not every member of the church participate in this obligation; and is not every one directly or indirectly connected with the church, under a personal responsibility in regard to this matter; a responsibility weighty and solemn, and from which it is impossible to escape? Let me ask you, then, beloved reader of these lines—if you call yourself a Christian—how will you escape from this obligation? Nay, whether you call yourself a Christian or not;—whether you bear the relation of formal membership to the church or not—how can you escape from it? If, indeed, you have publicly and formally united yourself with the church, this act adds, no doubt, to your obligation; makes it more strong and tender. But if you have never taken this step, still if you have heard the gospel; if you have the Bible in your hands, you are

bound to impart a knowledge of them to others. To whomsoever much is given, of them shall much be required. Let none say, then, we have never made a profession of religion, and therefore, are not under obligation to take an active part in spreading the gospel. You are bound, O reader, whoever you are, to believe and obey the gospel. But, if you fail of performing this duty, this failure does not release you from the obligation to perform another, that is, to send it abroad to others. Every one to whom the gospel comes is bound to believe it; and, believing it, to confess Christ before men. But if he believe not, though he ought not, remaining in unbelief, to profess a lie; yet, surely, his not making a profession of religion, in these circumstances, does not, cannot release him from the obligation to repent and believe. All the weight of responsibility arising from his character as a sinner to whom the offer of mercy comes, still lies upon him. In all our contributions to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, or, in any way, to promote the happiness of our fellow-men, it is our duty to give, from proper motives, and with a proper spirit, from a disinterested principle of love to God, and a sacred regard to the temporal and

eternal well-being of those to whom we give. But suppose a man supremely worldly, who knows nothing of holy love either to God or man, to know of a destitute family, hungry and starving at his door, while he has bread enough and to spare ; is he not bound to contribute to their relief ? If he should, unfeelingly, refuse to afford relief, when it was in his power, should we not consider him as a brute ? And if he should plead, as an apology for not doing it, that he was not a Christian, should we not regard him as insane ; as one who had entirely lost sight of the real nature of moral obligation ?

The obligation, then, of all who bear the Christian name, and of all who even possess the gospel, to do their part for spreading it abroad, being so plain, let me entreat you, beloved reader, to bring this question home, without partiality, and without evasion, to your conscience and your heart, and to ask. —Am I faithfully discharging this obligation ? —am I fulfilling my duty in regard to the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom ?—am I acting as if I verily believed the gospel to be the most precious of all gifts of God to fallen, lost man ; and that there can be no real happiness, temporal or eternal, without it ?—am

I, in a word, habitually acting toward my destitute fellow-creatures as I should wish them, if I were in their situation, to act toward me? Which of us, dear reader, can honestly answer these questions without a consciousness of deep delinquency? And if any of us are compelled, in candour, to reply that we are entirely, or in a great measure, neglecting the duty to which they refer, how can we dare to take the name or the seat of Christians?

I fear there is a large amount of self-deception in the minds of many professing Christians in regard to this subject. If they were asked, Can any one be a disciple of Christ who does not sincerely desire the spread of the gospel, and the enlargement of the Redeemer's kingdom? they would promptly and decisively answer, No. If they were again asked, whether it is possible either for the church, or for any individuals, to prosecute any extensive plan for evangelizing the world, without a large expenditure of funds, they would with equal promptness and decision reply, No. If further interrogated, how these funds were to be obtained, they would, without hesitation, say, The members of the church ought, doubtless, to furnish them.

But if one question more were addressed to them—Have *you* contributed your due proportion of what ought to be furnished for this great object? they would probably respond—“Not, perhaps, fully, but we have contributed as much as was convenient, and we trust that the great Head of the church, whose is the power, will provide all that may be necessary for the accomplishment of the object.” Is this the spirit of those who would deal honestly with conscience, and with God? Did the Redeemer do no more than was *convenient* for our salvation? Did the Apostles do nothing more than was convenient for bearing the glad tidings of great joy to the benighted and the perishing? Will those poor, stinted contributions, made without self-denial or a sacrifice, and which you feel, at the time, to be falling below what they ought to be, give any satisfaction in a dying hour, when you come to review your course, and examine the evidences of your sincere discipleship? “O that we were wise, that we understood this, that we would consider our latter end!”

We look back with sorrow and shame on the want of zeal and energy on the part of those who have gone before us, when we recollect that eighteen centuries have passed

away, since the full light of gospel knowledge and privilege has dawned upon our world; and yet not more than one quarter part of the population of our globe has ever heard of the glad tidings of redeeming love. Our fathers quieted their consciences with one plea or another, while they were doing so little to send the light of life to those who were sitting in the region and shadow of death. We are quieting our consciences with pleas quite as insufficient for our indolence. But how long will it take to evangelize the world, if the work should go on no faster than we are now conducting it? Alas! at the end of eighteen centuries more, so slow is the present rate of progress, that, if we proceed no faster than we are now doing, and if the earth's population goes on to increase as we have reason to expect, we shall be found to have gained but little, if any thing, on the wants and miseries of our fallen world.

What Presbyterian is there who loves his church, and who, above all, loves his Saviour, who is not grieved and humbled, when he learns how meagre is the support, and how embarrassed the movements of our Boards of Missions, in sending the gospel to the destitute and the perishing; when he reads in the

various channels of public intelligence, that all our missionary stations, abroad and at home, are calling for more labourers, and entreating us to extend our plans, to enlarge our schools, so as to comprehend the hundreds of children who are waiting to be taken into them, but cannot be received for want of more means? Who is not, I say, grieved and humbled, when he finds that the funds placed at the disposal of our laborious and faithful Boards are more likely to be diminished than increased; that these funds are so inadequate, that, instead of enlarging their plans, they are likely to be obliged to contract them; that, instead of sending more labourers, there is danger of their being compelled to call back some who have been sent? O that the friends of Christ would be persuaded to arise as one man, and to say, with a zeal and an emphasis never yet put forth, "These things must not be so! and, God being our helper, these things shall no longer be so!"

Our blessed Saviour long ago said, "The children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light." Of the truth of this fact, we have testimonials so numerous and striking, that they cannot escape observation, and ought most deeply to hum-

ble us before God. The lovers of worldly gain, of carnal pleasure, and of secular show and honours, are ready to bestow treasures without stint on their favourite objects. Who does not know that millions on millions are freely, nay, eagerly bestowed on *intoxicating poisons*, which, if devoted to the hallowed work of evangelizing the world, would suffice for sending the gospel to every heathen nation now accessible to the religion of Christ? Who does not every day see the votaries of this world submitting to privations, and making sacrifices for promoting temporal objects, which, if they could be devoted to our missionary Boards, would furnish the most ample means for executing their largest plans? And shall we be compelled to sit down, under the mortifying conclusion that the mass of Christians cannot be excited to pay equal attention, and to take an equal interest in the kingdom of Christ, though they acknowledge it to be of infinitely more importance than all the kingdoms of this world and the glory of them? Remember how busy the enemies of religion are, in circulating their corrupt opinions, their infidel tracts, and all those destructive influences which unbelief and impiety are so zealously

engaged in scattering abroad. Remember, too, how active and unwearied the followers of "the man of sin," "the son of perdition" are, in spreading abroad their miserable superstitions and idolatries; how they compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when they have gained him, make him tenfold more the child of perdition than themselves. The foreign votaries of the papacy find it easy to collect from a hundred thousand to a quarter of a million of dollars annually, for sending to our country to propagate their unhallowed system of superstition and idolatry among us. And shall those who profess to be animated with the pure love of Christ, have less concern for the spread of the glorious gospel, and the salvation of their fellow-men? Shall those who are blessed with the knowledge of a pure gospel, and who profess to have felt its power, be unwilling to take the same pains, and to make equal sacrifices for sending to the destitute and the perishing, that gospel which is the power of God to salvation to every one that believeth? Alas, alas! what shall we say to the cavillers who exultingly recite these things, and who allege that the system of Romanism is more benign, and more abun-

dantly productive of benevolent fruits than that of Protestants?

Nor ought we, in our meditations on this subject, to forget the noble example of our brethren of the Free Church of Scotland, since their separation from the national establishment, and their assertion of "that liberty wherewith Christ hath made his people free." Though, by the disruption of their secularities, they have given up all their public endowments, and consigned their congregations to poverty, and to a struggle with all those difficulties which poverty brings with it; though, from that thrilling hour, they were compelled to take upon themselves burdens and responsibilities to which they had been altogether unaccustomed; yet they have not only replaced, substantially, national endowments, by the abundance of their spontaneous contributions, but they have also contributed more for missionary objects, during the short time that they have stood alone, than the whole endowed church ever raised before the disruption! How was this? Their affliction gave them a deeper sense of the value of the gospel, and of their obligations to send it, as far as they could, to the oppressed and the miserable. We are accustomed to

speak of their achievements with applause ; O that we may catch something of their spirit, and learn, like them, as the demands on our Christian liberality rise higher, and become more abundant, to open our hearts with cheerful and ever increasing enlargement !

Dear reader ! when you enter into your closet, and ask the blessing of God on your own soul ; when you thank him that your lot is cast in a land of Christian light and knowledge ; when you pray that your Bible, your Sabbaths, and all the means of grace with which you are favoured, may be blessed to your own spiritual benefit ; do you never suffer your mind to turn toward those who are destitute of all these spiritual privileges ? And if you ever think of them, in all their darkness and misery, can you divest yourself of the conviction, that you owe them something—more than you have ever done for them ? And can you ponder this debt in your mind, without rousing from your lethargy, and resolving that, by the grace of God, you will endeavor to do more than you have ever yet done for their benefit ? And oh, in that solemn place, and in that tender and solemn season, when you extend your

views forward a little ; when you think of a dying hour, and of the responsibilities connected with your appearance before the judgment seat of Christ, can you reflect without pain on the millions sitting in the region and shadow of death, for whose temporal and eternal benefit you have contributed far less than for some of the veriest luxuries, which you would have been as healthful and as happy without as with ?

Ministers of the gospel ! suffer an aged brother, who feels himself to be on the verge of his great account, to speak to you with freedom and affection. I cannot divest myself of the impression that a large part of the delinquency in zeal and effort in this great cause, in many of our churches, may be traced, in some measure at least, to the want of that deep interest, and those corresponding indefatigable labours in behalf of this cause, which ought to characterize their spiritual leaders and guides. I recollect too well, beloved brethren, my own delinquencies as a pastor, to admit of my pleading with you in any other than the most respectful and affectionate language. It is presumed you have made up your minds, that it is not your duty to engage in missionary work, either in the

foreign or domestic field. But is there, therefore, nothing incumbent on you in relation to the great missionary cause? I answer, just as much and as solemnly as if you were yourselves labourers in that great field. If you were missionaries, you would be bound to do all in your power to *carry* the gospel to those who had it not. But, being pastors, or labourers at home, you are bound by equally strong and solemn ties to do all in your power to *send* the gospel to those who are without it. You complain, perhaps, and express regret that your people are torpid and backward in fulfilling their duty in regard to the cause of missions. But, beloved brethren, is no share of the blame for this delinquency to be laid at your door? Have you done all in your power to enlighten, stimulate, and urge them forward to the discharge of their duty? Have you taken care to inform yourselves of the wants and miseries of the heathen, and of those in our own land, who are destitute of the gospel? Have you carried a deep impression of these wants and miseries with you into the pulpit from Sabbath to Sabbath, and into the family visitation from house to house, and have you laboured faithfully to impart this impression to all who lis-

ten to your voice? Are you careful to keep all whom you either stately or occasionally address, awake and alive, from time to time, to the claims of God upon them, as workers together with him in spreading the gospel? Are your habitual preaching, your public and social prayers, and your daily example a constant memento of their duty, and a powerful stimulus to its performance? If the leaders and guides of the people have not done this, are they free from the guilt of their people's delinquency? O, if pastors really performed their duty with fidelity and zeal, there would be little need of public agents to go from church to church to remind those pastors of their duty, and in fact, to take it out of their hands, and do it for them. If the great body of our pastors were animated with the spirit of Brainerd, and Whitefield, and Mills, and Evarts, and many more who might be mentioned, would the cause languish and stand still in so many of our churches as it now does? Yet can any one doubt that all our ministers ought to possess this spirit, and that it is to be lamented that they do not? Yes, it is because so many who bear the sacred office appear to take so little interest in the missionary cause, and either forget or neglect

to bring it before the minds of their people ; and, when they do attempt to speak of it, do it with so little apparent feeling, that they permit the subject, if I may so express it, to die away in the memories and hearts of those committed to their charge.

Elders and Deacons of the church of God ! allow me, before I close, to address a word of exhortation and entreaty to you ! You are set to be counsellors and helpers of your pastors in attending to the temporal and spiritual wants of the flock. Of course, if your pastors, from feeble health, or failing memories, or depressed spirits, become at any time, delinquent in attending to the claims of the missionary cause, it is your privilege and your duty to interpose and to prevent its being neglected or forgotten, so that you may be every day saying or doing something to impart knowledge, or awaken zeal in regard to this great cause. By doubling your own exertions, and endeavouring, each one, to excite some friend and neighbour to do the same ; and by labouring, in all your intercourse with the members of your respective congregations to excite and extend a missionary spirit ; by urging every one who can read, to take the missionary publications of our Boards,

you may accomplish an amount of aid to the cause which you cannot now anticipate.

Young Christian! This subject ought to be especially interesting to you. You are now setting out in your career of devotion and usefulness. If your course is to be an elevated and noble one, let it be as early as possible in good earnest. Begin at once to feel and act on the principle, that you are not your own; that you and all you have are entirely and forever the Lord's. Be assured there is nothing worth living for, but to do good, and to promote the enlargement of the Redeemer's kingdom; and the earlier, and the more sincerely and thoroughly you enter into the spirit of this plan of life, the happier you will be, and the richer blessing to your generation. Oh my dear young friends! if you would only realize the happiness which grows out of being habitually "constrained by the love of Christ," you would turn away from all the grovelling and ignoble pursuits in which a worldly spirit delights, and make his glory your supreme good.

Worldly man! have you nothing to do with this subject? Though you do not profess to love or seek the Redeemer's kingdom, yet you profess to have a benevolent regard

to the happiness of your fellow-men. You would be unwilling to be regarded as supremely selfish, and especially as misanthropic in regard to the great interests of temporal and social happiness. But have you not seen and heard enough to know that sending the gospel to those who have it not, whether at home or abroad, has a tendency essentially to improve their condition in this world, to say nothing of that which is to come? Have you no desire to take part in sending to your fellow-men, that which, if received, will render them more pure, more temperate, more industrious, and more happy; which will strike at the root of all those habits which tend to destroy personal and domestic comfort, and even life itself, and to elevate them at once on the scale of rational and social existence? If you cannot love the gospel, can you not see enough in the history of Christian missions to satisfy you that, in aiding them, you are aiding the great cause of human happiness? and if so, on what ground can you hesitate for a moment?

Finally, let us all endeavour to rouse ourselves to deeper sensibility, and more active zeal on this great subject. Let the language of the evangelical prophet be sounding in our

ears wherever we go, and whatever we undertake, "Awake, awake, put on strength, O Zion!" (Isaiah lii. 1.) O that it might please the Lord to raise up another Isaiah; another like him in spirit and in eloquence, to go forth through the length and breadth of the land, proclaiming in the name of the Lord, Awake, awake, put on strength, O Zion! Or rather, O that it might please Isaiah's God to pour out upon all our churches, and upon all our ministers and elders, a spirit of awakening, and of active zeal for the salvation of souls! What object in the universe, let me ask, can more emphatically or more worthily call on us to put forth all our strength, than that of extending the Redeemer's empire, and promoting the everlasting benefit of millions of immortal spirits; and for this purpose sending them that glorious gospel, which is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth? Surely here is an object worthy of every effort, and of every sacrifice that can be made by intelligent and accountable creatures.—Again, then, I say, in the language of the Prophet, to every minister, every member, and every well-wisher of our Zion, Awake! Awake! Pray and labour without ceasing, until there shall be a general and

united movement of our whole church to carry the glorious gospel to every kindred, and people, and nation, and tongue ; until the knowledge and glory of the Lord shall "cover the earth, as the waters fill the sea." Amen !

A MISSIONARY'S APPEAL.

The following earnest and pointed appeal, from a missionary in Calcutta, addressed to professing Christians in India, seems to have an appropriate place here. [Editor of the Presbyterian Board of Publication.]

Do you ever attend the Missionary Prayer Meeting?

DEAR FRIENDS:—Do you ever attend the Monthly Missionary Prayer Meeting? If not, come and see. You are Christians by profession, and doubtless feel interested in the progress of Christianity in the world; at least you should; for angels, who know more of the worth of the soul, and the importance of its salvation, rejoice over every sinner who repents; they feel deeply interested in the salvation of mankind. The Lord Jesus, in whom you profess to rest all your hopes for salvation, feels intensely interested in the salvation of men. He sees of the travail of his soul in it and is satisfied. Who will be there? Were the angels of God on earth in human form, they would be present at the Missionary Prayer Meeting. They would not

neglect it either for the purposes of ease, or pleasure, or aggrandizement ; no, they would press through all to be there ; yea, even as they found their way to the house of Lot in Sodom, so would they find their way to that sanctuary in which is held the assembly for united prayer. If the Lord Jesus were on earth, as he was when he tabernacled amongst men, he would be there, the most interested of all spectators. If it is the spot towards which the Saviour of the world would bend his steps, because there he would find those who are interested in the great work for which he died and rose again ; if angels and our blessed Master would be there were they on earth, why should not you go ? Why should you, or how can you, stay away ? Nay, Christ is there, for he has promised to be in the midst of his people, even with two or three, when they unite together in prayer ; and he has further said, that if we agree touching any thing, it shall be given. The Spirit of God is there, waiting to pour out a blessing upon the church and the world, to enlighten, convert and sanctify the whole human family. The Father of mercies, the God of all grace, is there, waiting to be gracious ; for for these things he will be inquired of, by

the house of Israel, that he may do them for them. The whole hierarchy of heaven watch over it with intense interest. And seeing we are encompassed with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us be present; let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily induce us to remain away, or be negligent of the Missionary Prayer Meeting

The object of the Missionary Prayer Meeting has a strong claim on you as a Christian. It is to beseech God to pour out his blessing upon mankind, to pray that he would fulfil his gracious and glorious promises to the church and the world, that he would put away sin from the human family, and bring about that period when all the nations of the earth shall be blessed with peace, and joy, and hope. As you look abroad upon the mass of idolators, and Mahommedans, and Romanists, and unconverted nominal Christians; some of them, it may be, domestics, relatives, neighbours with whom you may be on terms of intimacy and friendship; can you, as you look upon such and read such solemn declarations of Holy writ as these—"Except ye be born again ye cannot see the kingdom of God"—"No idolator, nor whosoever loveth or maketh a lie, shall have inheritance in

the kingdom of God"—can you look abroad under such circumstances, and not feel concerned for their salvation; especially when you know that it has been said, by the unerring Teacher, Jesus, "What shall it profit a man, if he should gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" Can you be indifferent under such circumstances; unfeeling in such a position? Can you stay away from the assembly which is engaged in supplication for the coming of Christ's kingdom and the establishment of peace, and truth, and righteousness on the earth? Ponder and pray over your own state if you can, and fear lest you should come short of the rest promised to the people of God. Fear lest you should not yet have passed from death unto life, lest you have a name to live and be yet dead. "Awake, thou that sleepest, and Christ shall give thee life. Some have not the knowledge of Christ; I speak this to your shame."

Yours, &c.,

PASTOR.