

COMPARATIVE CLAIMS

OF

HOME AND FOREIGN MISSIONS :

A

SERMON,

Preached in the Second Presbyterian Church in Brooklyn, on the day
of the Annual Contribution for Home Missions, April 2d, 1843.

By **ICHABOD S. SPENCER, D. D.**

PUBLISHED BY REQUEST.

BROOKLYN :

A. M. WILDER, 51 FULTON STREET.

1843.

D. FELT & Co. Stationers' Hall,
245 Pearl and 34 Wall sts.

S E R M O N .

LU. 11. 2. "THY KINGDOM COME."

The kingdom of God is that new and spiritual dominion, which divine grace establishes in the hearts of men. Its subjects are regenerated sinners. Once they were not under the spiritual dominion of God. They neither loved him, nor served him. "But they are washed, but they are sanctified, but they are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." A new dominion is set up in their hearts. They love God. They aim to do his will. And though extremely imperfect still, yet they are the subjects of the Prince of Peace, and shall be more and more conformed to his will, till finally, he shall present them before the throne of the Father spotless.

This kingdom of God is set up in the souls of men, through God's appointed means of grace, and the blessings of the Holy Spirit accompanying them. The word of God, especially the word preached, the sacraments and prayer, are the main instrumentalities for the recovery of this revolted and miserable world to God.

In the text, we are instructed by the Saviour to pray for the coming of this kingdom in all the world. The very next petition is, "thy will be done as in heaven, so in earth."

The pious in every age *have* prayed for this. They have expected it. They "have seen the promises afar off, and been persuaded of them," and have known that the time is coming when Jesus Christ shall reign in the hearts of men; when every darkened nation shall have received light; when every hostile weapon shall be dashed to pieces; when the

song of praise shall echo from the sides of Atlas and tremble over the waves of Ganges; and when, from every hill-top and every valley, the shout shall go up, one universal brotherhood of voices, "the kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ."

Effort, to more or less extent, has been put forth by the church to extend her light, and love, and influence, and bring men into this kingdom of God. Alas! that she has done so little! Generations have vanished out of her sight borne on upon the mighty roll of centuries into another and unseen world; while, it would seem, the church has never mustered her strength as she ought, and laid down her offerings on the altar of God, and proved the power of prayer, and never expected as she ought, to prepare these dying generations of men to stand before God!—But she has done something. Duty in this respect is no longer a secret. The precept and the promise are now too plain for any lingering doubt with an intelligent christian; and the wailing entreaty of dying millions, borne on every breeze that sweeps round the world, falls on the hearts of thousands of believers, as the voice of the Master calling on us to pity and save the poor! We hear this beseeching cry. We heed it. It affects our hearts, to think what millions of men are dying and unfit to die; and have no means to save them; and the last words they utter are moanings of dreadful despair! These are not times for inactivity; and this morning, we are going to make the annual contribution for the cause of Missions in our country.

This one cause, in the opinion of him who speaks to you, is second now to none other in the arguments it presents for your liberal contributions. In the same opinion, it is *more* overlooked, in proportion to its real importance and the propriety of its receiving support, than any other of the prominent objects, which solicit your aid and receive it from month to month.

We are going to present to you some considerations on this subject. Our object is not so much to give you counsel,

or give direction to your charities, or even to give you instruction, as it is to induce you to think and decide for yourselves. "I speak as to wise men, judge ye what I say."

I. The different modes, in which good people strive to advance the Redeemer's kingdom ought to be maturely considered.

When benevolent men are solicited in behalf of different objects, and all good ones; they usually, if not always, find themselves unable to bestow as much as they would be glad to have it in their power to do. They cannot do every thing. Their Lord has not given them the means. He has kept some of them in very narrow circumstances, perhaps for the very purpose of having them exercise a more severe industry, and a more careful economy, and a more constant and virtuous self-denial, in order to be able to extend a helping hand to those who are in want. Others are not so straitened; but then, there are many ways of doing good;—they are all costly;—and the most favored are obliged to portion out their liberality, not according to what is needed for the evangelization of the world, but according to what they have the ability and the heart to give. And therefore it becomes necessary to compare one object with another, one way of doing good with another, and come to a conclusion, *how much* of that, which they have to bestow, shall be appropriated to one object or way of doing good, and how much shall be appropriated to another. They *must* do this. They cannot avoid it. It arises from the necessity of the case. Not an intelligent and kind-hearted believer in all Christendom is able, whatever be his wealth, to bestow upon objects he approves, as much as he would be glad to give. Every benevolent man who is accustomed to this benevolence at all *does* do this. He does it in every instance of benefaction. He gives much or little according to his ability and benevolence, and according as the matter before him appears to him more or less important at the time. And more; every man who gives anything *ought* to do this. He ought not to avoid it if he could. He ought, in the exercise of a sound discretion, to

make such a use of what he has to bestow for the establishment of the kingdom of God, as shall do most good. He ought by no means to act blindly. If he does, his benefactions may fail of the good they might do, not only, but they may do positive injury to the very causè he loves and attempts to aid. For it is by no means to be questioned, that, under the influence of misguided men, matters are brought up, which present an appearance of propriety, and whose advocates plead strongly for them, and ask for much liberality in their behalf; when, in reality, every penny bestowed upon them is worse than flung away. So that a sound and careful discretion—a discrimination in reference to the nature of the calls that are made upon our liberality, is one of our incumbent and important duties, as Christians and as men.

And these ideas are enough to show us, in what regard we are to hold that declaration, which we hear from so many amiable people, that one religious object ought not to be compared with another. The declaration is false. It is utterly unrighteous and un-Protestant. One object *ought* to be compared with another. As Christians, as men of duty and good morals, we are bound to do the most good we can, with the means we have to employ. This must be our intention, or we have not a righteous one. We have no right to squander our means; or employ them to do a less good, when they might do a greater, in any case wherein we are left to be governed by our own mind. Our mind should be a wise and righteous mind. If we were not *Protestants*,—if we had given up our moral principles and feelings to the control of some ghostly conscience-keeper; then indeed, we might consistently bestow without discrimination, and trust *him* to direct our bounty, whom we had already entrusted to keep our conscience. But, as those who are under the Bible and not under an “Apostolical succession,” falsely so called—as those who expect to give account each one for himself unto God; it becomes us to look wisely at the objects which solicit our charities, to compare one object with another, and do the most good we can with the means put into our hands.

There can be nothing wrong in our asking *advice*, of those better informed than ourselves, of ministers or anybody else. But as far as possible, "let every man be fully persuaded in his *own* mind." And let not the common people take every thing upon trust, and leave it to ministers to appropriate their benefactions and manage them as they will. Ministers are generally bad financiers; and if they had wisdom enough, I am afraid they would not long have grace enough, to manage justly the benevolence of the church, if left to their own will.

Let it not, then, be said, among Protestant and Bible Christians,—among those who keep their own conscience, that one religious object is not to be compared with another. You do make this comparison: you ought to make it: if you give any thing you cannot avoid making it, except by the un-Protestant device of committing your conscience in benevolence to the keeping of somebody else.

II. It seems to us, that there is reason to believe, that peculiar circumstances have led the people of this country to overlook too much the object before us.

The objects you patronize here, from month to month, are all good. They all have the same great object in view, to set up on earth the kingdom of God. None of them could properly be passed over. We need the Bible Society—the Tract Society—the Sunday School and Seamen's Cause—the Education Society—Home and Foreign Missions. In no one of these is there any such pre-eminence as to give it a claim, from its own nature, superior to the claims of others.

A claim of precedence or superiority has sometimes been advanced for the Bible Society, and has been pleaded in the ears of multitudes; just as if there were no room to question, but that cause is more important than any other not only, but just as if the heaviest part of our different donations should certainly be devoted to that cause. But we can easily conceive, that other matters, *necessary* for the world's conversion, may cost more, than it would cost to give a Bible to every inhabitant of the Globe. If such a gift were all, the work would soon and easily be done. We can easily con-

ceive also, that whole nations of men may be in such a state of ignorance and degradation and irreligion, that you would do them more good, by giving them Tracts which they would read, than the Bible which they would neglect. Some cautious judgment, therefore, is needful—some discrimination—some comparing one mode of doing good with another. A Bible is not so costly a thing as a minister. It needs not, like him, daily “bread to eat and raiment to put on.” And often, even with the most constant use, it will last longer; and as ministers wear out and die off others must be educated to take their places.

The pre-eminence in importance and in just claim for the largest patronage has been often set up in behalf of Foreign Missions. We are *not going to say*, that Foreign Missions does not deserve this regard. But before we have done, (if you give attention to what we shall say,) you will find some reasons for not assenting to that idea, without some careful thinking on the subject. It is certainly true, that, at present, the benevolent people of our congregations bestow more upon the cause of Foreign Missions, than upon any of its sister Institutions. They may be right. Perhaps they would continue to do the same thing, if they should examine as extensively into the operations and promises of these institutions, as they are capable of doing. And yet, it may be, that peculiar circumstances, and not wholly a sound and just judgment, have mainly given such a direction to their charities. We think it most certain, that the benevolent of this favored country have not done too much for sending the gospel to other and heathen nations. Would they had done more! Would, that they would come up to the measure of duty and do it now! And when we compare Foreign Mission with Home Mission enterprize, let us not be understood, as desiring to *divert* from the former a single fraction for the purpose of turning it into the channel of the home department. But looking at the extensive action for evangelizing the heathen, and commending all that has been done, let us take that, as an argument and stimulus and encouragement,

for doing more than we have done yet, for our own country and our own kindred.

I have before me the account of the annual receipts for Domestic and Foreign Missions, of those great Institutions which it pleases you to employ to dispense your bounty ;—I mean, the Boards of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church on the one hand ; and the American Home Missionary Society and American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions on the other. I ask your attention, for a moment, first, to the comparative amounts given to the *General Assembly's* Boards of Foreign and Home Missions.

In 1842	For. Miss. received	\$57,909 29.	Home Miss.	\$34,463 17.
In 1841	“ “ “	63,743 97:	“ “	33,522 43.
In 1840	“ “ “	54,644 65.	“ “	39,220 73.
In 1839	“ “ “	55,566 43.	“ “	39,412 79.
In 1838	“ “ “	44,748 62.	“ “	32,522 49.

This is going back far enough, to show the general feelings of the patrons of these Boards ; and almost back to the commencement of the separate action of the General Assembly's Board of Foreign Missions. Under the General Assembly, then, for the last five years,

Foreign Missions has received, \$276,612 96.

Home Missions has received, 179,131 61.

So that, through these channels, 97,481 35 *more* has been given for Foreign than for Home Missions, in the last five years.

Next, we ask your attention to a similar comparison, between the amounts bestowed for the same purposes into the Treasuries of the American Board for Foreign Missions and the Home Missionary Society.

In 1842,	For. Miss. received	\$318,396 53.	Home Miss.	\$92,463 64.
In 1841,	“ “ “	235,189 30.	“ “	85,413 34.
In 1840,	“ “ “	241,691 04.	“ “	78,345 20.
In 1839,	“ “ “	244,169 82.	“ “	82,564 63.
In 1838,	“ “ “	236,170 98.	“ “	86,522 45.

Through these channels, then, for the last five years,
 Foreign Missions has received, \$1,275,617 67.
 Home Missions has received, 425,309 26.

So that, through these channels, 850,308 41 *more* has been given for Foreign, than for Home Missions, in the last five years. If the Home Missionary Society had received *three times* as much as it has, it would only have come up to an equality with the Foreign Board.

And this comparative amount seems to be a kind of established rule. If we extend the comparison back to the year 1827, (the date of the first report of the American Home Missionary Society,) the result will not be very essentially altered. The joint income of these two Institutions since that period has amounted to . . . \$3,822,922 59. Of this sum the Home Miss. Society received 1,045,627 99. not one third of the amount.

Now this may be all right, if we have no more to give. We are not complaining of it. But we are very sure, that the cause of Home Missions deserves a more efficient patronage. Due self-denial—due Christian love for souls—a large measure of the spirit of her Lord and Master, would soon enable the church of this country to give the gospel to every human being that breathes its air.

As we consider these two objects, (Foreign and Home Missions,) we ought, indeed, to remember that they rather contrast, than compare with one another. Look at some of the items.

Allahabad and Bombay, China and Ceylon, are farther off than Indiana and Illinois and Iowa ; and it costs *more* to send and sustain a Missionary on the other side of the globe, than just in our neighbourhood.

At home, the cost of ordinary school education is not defrayed from Mission Funds ; but in foreign lands it must be, or children must be left to grow up in ignorance of letters to a vast extent, or be taught heathenism along with all the erudition they attain.

The printing of Bibles and other books of education and religion, for our own country, does not devolve upon Home Missionary Institutions ; while, for the heathen, much of this comes under the head of Foreign Missions, so called.

To a great extent, buildings for schools and seminaries, as well as church edifices, must be erected from Foreign Mission funds ; but Home Mission Institutions are not called upon for any of this expenditure.

These are some of the items. It should be remembered, therefore, that Home and Foreign Missions do not exactly compare with one another. For our own country we do many things under other names, which for heathen lands, are of necessity embraced under the name of expenditures for Foreign Missions. And hence, when the comparative amounts of expense look strange to us, it becomes us to consider carefully the different objects they have in view, before we conclude that our charity is too diffusive.

But it is not at all strange, if the attention of the benevolent has been too little directed to our own land. We name to you some of the things which have tended to produce such a result.

The people of God slept too long over the subject of the world's evangelization. And when their attention was once aroused to the subject, and they saw on the wide map of nations country after country with all their untold population in deep darkness, in idolatry and awful degradation and misery ; it is no wonder, that the object of saving the long neglected nations should have almost entirely absorbed their attention and their charities.

That object was new to them. It is not now old. The Foreign Board commenced in 1810. One of its first Missionaries was a school-mate of my own. Things that *can* interest the human mind often have a power of interest by reason of their novelty, which they could not have without it. Home Missions was no novelty. The General Assembly commenced that work in 1789 : the New York Missionary Society was instituted in 1796 : the Connecticut Missionary

Society, in 1798: the Massachusetts Missionary Society in 1799: and the New Jersey Missionary Society in 1801.—And it is not to be wondered at, that attention and liberality should have been and should still be inclined to follow the impulses of novelty, and overlook too much the old field of work.

As the enterprise of Foreign Missions began to be prosecuted, the people of God were astonished at what they discovered. They were amazed to find Divine Providence preparing the way so rapidly for the spread of Christianity. Nation after nation was flung open to the gospel. Barriers were broken down. Obstacles were lifted out of the way. The whole world seemed almost ready to woo the advent and welcome the foot-steps of the Christian Missionary. This seemed like the direct pointing of the finger of God. Men thought it so—called it so—and eager eyes were looking to see the rising beams of the Millennium glory. And it is no wonder, if the opened and waiting nations, now unexpectedly ready to receive the gospel, should have led the benevolent people of this country too much to forget the wants of their own land.

It is very natural, that our attention, zeal and vigor of effort should correspond to the deemed magnitude of the work we have to perform. Beyond the oceans lay an opened world. Not one country, but nine-tenths of the globe's population lay out on the vision of the awaking church, as the field of her appropriate work for setting up the kingdom of God. These old nations were full of people. Their population was told on the startled ear of the listening Christian, by tens and hundreds of millions! The Church was astonished at the magnitude of the work before her!—It is by no means surprising, that those accustomed to pray, “thy kingdom come,” should have lent their attention to a darkened world and its dying millions, and should greatly have overlooked less imposing work which lay nearer by.

There may be some romance in religious achievements as well as in any other. Few of us, perhaps, are actuated sim-

ply by cool wisdom, conscience and truth, aside from any mixture of more impassioned emotions. We seem quite as likely to be influenced by those spirit-stirring appeals, wherein magnificence figures and gives a new and strange energy to hope ; as by the more humble and plain and not less important, though less imposing duties, of which it cannot be said,

“’Tis distance lends enchantment to the view.”

In respect to the mighty work of *regenerating a world*, the church has heard every possible and stirring appeal. The changes have been rung, on the moral dignity of the enterprise—the vastness of the work—the duty and privilege of doing it. “The field is the world.” Deep darkness hangs over dying millions on the other side of the globe. They are rushing to eternity without ever having heard a sermon. The hope was waked into exercise, that before another generation of mankind should have gone down to the grave, the grand and glorious object might be accomplished, of publishing Christ and pardon and immortal life to every living man.—These are great ideas. They wake deep emotions. They seem to fall in with the expanding and brotherhood principles of the gospel. They have great and Christ-like truths in them. This is not to be denied.—And while the emotions they excited have been living in all their freshness in thousands of benevolent hearts ; who can wonder and who can blame us, if we have, while thinking to redeem a world, partially lost sight of the smaller and less romantic duties, which lay nearer home ? Who can wonder, if piety has sometimes regarded the conversion of a heathen soul, as something *far more* done for Christ, than the conversion of a soul in our own land ?

To a believer—to every sensible man, there is something exceedingly exciting in the horrid and bloody practices of heathen religion. Such religion is degrading and cruel. Men leave their aged parents to starve in some untrodden wild, and be devoured by the wild beasts of the desert ! Mothers bury their children alive ! Frantic devotees fling themselves before the idol’s car, and it is drawn on by the

frenzied multitude, its victim crushed and its wheels dripping with human blood!—The 3 things have amazed and aroused us. They ought to have done so. As Christians and as men, we ought to have felt them. But there are no such excitements, to wake our interests for the souls cut off from the gospel in the new settlements of our own West—without a minister—without a Bible—and just as really needing our pity, charity and prayers for their salvation, as the worshipers Bramah, Boodh or Vishnoo. And hence, excited by the foreign tale, (which no man could hear without emotion,) it is not wonderful, if our feelings of Christian compassion have led us too much to overlook the unblest souls of our own country.

These are some of the of the causes which have been operating and are operating still.—We have not done too much for the heathen—or felt too much or prayed too much, for distant and darkened nations. But we have felt and prayed and done *too little*, for the destitute in our own land. If we shall do so much for other countries, shall we not at least do *as much* for our own?

III. And therefore, if we have sufficiently accounted for our neglect, as mentioned the best apologies that can be made for it; let us direct your attention to some of the matters, which seem to us to deserve your special regard, as you would learn the measure of your duty towards Missions at home.—We select eight ideas out of a multitude that occur to us.

1. The people in the destitute settlements of our country, (mostly in the newer States and the Territories,) are of our own nation and blood. They are our fellow citizens, our brothers, sisters and children.

The gospel is not selfish, to limit our benevolence to our own family and nation; but the gospel *is* wise and orderly, and sometimes puts us to do one work sooner than another. Both works may be equally *good*,—but both may *not* be equally *ours*. Duty, wisdom, gospel, all demand of us to find our own. That must be *first* done and done *alone*, if we have

ability to do no other. "If any man provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith and is worse than an infidel." On this principle, those in our own land destitute of the gospel become our own and our first work. The father of a family must provide for his own, because they are his, and because if he does not, nobody else will. If he neglects that, for the purpose of providing for others whom he may pity, he has utterly mistaken his duty. He may talk what he will, of the expansive and unselfish spirit of the gospel: but he ought to know, that it is expansive by order and righteousness and proportion,—and not by the dictates of caprice, and the dreams of an infidel socialism.—The unevangelized souls of our wide West are connected with us by blood, by nation, by all that belongs to civil government, science arts and the common interests of "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." If we would provide for the perpetuity of our beloved Republic, it becomes us to provide for their intelligence and virtue. Republicanism, freedom cannot last long in our country, if ignorance, superstition and vice are permitted to sway the destinies of our empire. That intelligence and virtue needful for the perpetuity of our valued institutions and happiness, never can be secured by any thing but the gospel,—and the gospel in its Protestant purity. Lord Brougham was right, both honest and right, when he said in the British Parliament, that for whatever of freedom England enjoyed under her present institutions, she was indebted for it, to the influence of the Puritans. *They* were the men who withstood the onsets of tyranny. They were men *fit* to be the guardians of the ark of liberty, because they were men of God. Mustered on the high-places of the field, they carried their Bibles in their knapsacks. They were men of conscience—and prayer. And surely we are as much indebted to their firmness and virtue, as that noble lord maintained that England was.—We want their piety in the West,—their intelligence, virtue and firmness. We want more Missionaries of the gospel there. If *we* do not aid that growing and needy population,

nobody else will. They depend on us: Neither Scotland nor England will send them Missionaries.—It is not so, with the foreign heathen.—England looks on China:—*not*, always to butcher her citizens in unrighteous war waged to compel the reception of her pernicious opium: nor always to extort, in robbery, millions of money at the cannon's mouth! There is another class of men in England. There is piety there: and that piety is embarked throughout the British Empire, to do something for evangelizing the nations. But it does not send Missionaries to our rising and destitute settlements. That is our own work. If it is not done, the sin lies at our own door. We cannot divide the blame with any one else.—The conversion of the world is the common duty of Christendom: and is it wrong for us to think; that since the policy—(to use no worse word,)—since the policy of Great Britain, ever since the sixteenth century, has been drawing her wealth from the Indies, the piety of Great Britain may justly and largely be called upon, to evangelize at least the millions under her own empire?

We say then, on this principle of doing our own work, the people of this land ought to mete out their liberality to the Home Mission cause. The cause is our own. The cry of want, along the lakes, that sweeps over the prairies, and now echoes from the sides of the Rocky Mountains, reaches no ears but ours.—Shall we neglect our own work? shall brothers and children ask us to send them the gospel, and ask in vain?

2. There is such a thing as attempting too much at once. Wisdom will not only look at her work, but at her powers for doing it. A wise farmer will work no more land, than he can work well. A wise merchant never extends his business beyond his ability to see to it. A wise mechanic does not undertake a hundred jobs, when he knows he can finish but ten.—This principle properly comes into action on the matter before us. The liberality of the good may be so extended and diffused, may spread over so wide a space and undertake so much at once, as to diminish its efficacy. By

that unwise procedure ; attempts, operations, the whole work may be flung into such a condition, as to be utterly unprepared for those exigencies which will arise, and such a condition as to lose much of what has been gained ; and thus render benevolence and its labors to some extent in vain. We have had something of this. We had it, when schools among the heathen, established at no small expense of labor, money and suffering, were compelled to be disbanded ; and the half-taught children were flung back into the arms of a cruel heathenism. It ought not to have been so. The benevolence of this so favored nation ought to have responded fully to the demands of the occasion. But what we are saying is, that our sentiments of compassion ought not to destroy our prudence. It is better to do less and do it well, than to attempt too much at once, and fail in all of it. And *that spot* certainly, where our effort should be so concentrated as not to fail through the weakness of too wide diffusion, is to be found in our own country.—Let minds accustomed to the carefulness of thinking carry out this idea:

3. The object of all these benevolent enterprizes is the same. We serve Christ. We aim to build up the kingdom of God—to save souls. We have not so much ability in this work as we want. We could print more Bibles, more Tracts, educate and send out more ministers of the gospel, if we had more pecuniary means to do it.—(We could not, indeed, bestow divine grace, but—blessed be his name,—Jesus Christ bestows it : and after these refreshings of his dews on Zion, young men are found in our churches, too few of whom are brought into this ministry.)—The church could do more to evangelize the world, if she had more means. Where shall she get it ?—I know, “the silver and the gold are the Lord’s :” but he does not bestow them upon idleness, nor make his bounty render useless our wisdom.—And the additional aid the church needs for her work, in money and men, she must look for, not alone in the additional piety and liberality of her members, but in the help of those, whom her piety and prayers shall reclaim. As the gospel extends over new fields, and new churches are raised up ; these churches

will add their benevolence and their efforts to your own, and thus help on the work of the kingdom of God.

Now, where shall we look for the most and the speediest of this help that we want? Shall we look for it, from the down-trodden hordes of oppressed India converted to God? Shall we expect it from indolent Africa? Will it come from prejudiced China speedily?—or the converted isles of the ocean?—or from classic and Christianized Greece?—No, no! Best, quickest, most, we may expect it from those very spots in our own country, for whose struggling and infant churches, we solicit your benevolence this morning. We point you to the WEST,—the young vigorous, mighty, but now destitute West. *There* is your aid. Only evangelize her children; and in a little while,—before this generation are gone off the stage,—the West shall bring up her rich offerings and lay them side by side with yours on the altar of God. She will have the means. Look at the opulence already seen in such places as Buffalo and Detroit and Chicago and Columbus and Cincinnati, her infant queen city. Look at her soil. Look at her commerce on the lakes, and pouring along her hundred mighty and majestic rivers. Her sons are no down-trodden victims of oppression. They are no mindless and effeminate hordes of a degenerated and degenerating country. They are born free. Your own blood flows in their veins. Their country has all the elements of wealth and greatness. Struggling now with their difficulties, they will come up a race of active, industrious and vigorous men; and if converted to Christ, they will be the *most* efficient and most liberal helpers you can look for, in giving the gospel to all the world. They have commenced already to aid you. The two hundred and sixty four churches in Western New York, once aided in their infancy by the Home Missionary Society, have already given more than sixty thousand dollars to send Missionaries to the more destitute beyond them. They have joined you with both money and men, to send the gospel to foreign lands.—The first church in the city of Utica was a Home Mission church. Its first Minister, still alive, was

aided by the Hampshire Missionary Society of Massachusetts. Now, that great congregation, in that great and rich and growing city, pays back such principle and such interest into the treasury of benevolence, as you will look for in vain, from the Missionary Churches of Africa or Asia. Just so, of a hundred other churches. We want your benevolence to *make it* just so, till your evangelized population has passed the gorges of the Rocky Mountains, and chaunted the song of redemption down to the shores of the Pacific. You *can* make it so if you will. At this very moment the showers of divine grace are descending upon your Home Mission Churches; and after they have passed the few years of their feebleness and infancy, they will furnish you the most efficient aid you can look for from man. In the WEST lies your best help for converting the world.

4. We have inadvertantly encroached upon an idea which we had intended for a *fourth* and separate consideration. We intended to mention, not only the resources of the West, but the character of the people.—But—no matter. Take them together. They are both remarkable. There is no such rich region elsewhere in the whole world, from which you can expect such plentiful and such speedy returns, for what you shall do for it in sending the gospel. There is no such excellence in common character anywhere else, from whose aid and influence and vigour, when touched by the grace of God, you can expect such furtherance for the gospel. *Convert the WEST, if you would convert the WORLD.*

When you are contemplating this idea, it cannot escape your consideration, that there is such a thing as national character; and that your efforts to do good—Christian good in the world, may be vain or effectual, not entirely on account of their own nature, but under the control of other circumstances; especially, the *character* of the men you attempt to Christianize. Retrograding people or nations are less hopeful subjects of attempted good, than those in infancy or progress. Scholars and historians will see much force in

this idea. In the old age and degeneracy of nations, there is a coming decrepitude of mind, of energy, of genius, of all that constitutes worth and character in nations. *Man* is a different being then. His very blood seems tainted. If mind is not perished, it is devoted to trifling, and not to utility. If genius lives, it is exercised for little else, than the purposes of luxury and indolence. Rome, Egypt, all Asia are examples. Hopeless, then, almost hopeless is any attempt to help man in his decline; and arrest the downward progress of a nation, which has reached its summit, and commenced the downward and dreadful march of degeneracy! The strife to aid Greece—poetic, classic, beauteous, chivalrous Greece—a strife vain, or almost vain, is an apt and mournful example. There is a stage, where *mind* seems to lose its elasticity and independence and genius and decision. Heart has lost its greatness. Themistocles would be ashamed to own as a descendant or a Greek, the low, cunning, time-serving, false hearted being, that now sips the streams of Cephissus. Fabius and Cato, the Gracchi would blush to be named in the same breath with the modern Italian. *Gone* is the original greatness, the mental dignity of Egypt, Greece and Rome! Their moral sublimity of character has perished! The Egyptian gazes on the Pyramids without an emotion! The Greek feeds his sheep around the Athenian acropolis, with only the relics of his ancient nation left in his soul,—enough to sigh after the departed glory, but not enough, to imitate or emulate the perished greatness which he boasts, as having dignified the blood of his ancestors. The cunning and treacherous Italian moves over the tombs of Etruria, and the more modern sepulchers of Senators, Patricians, and Emperors, of poets, orators and statesmen, without the manliness to attempt to rise to the dignity of the dust he treads on. History lacks example of the resurrection of a nation once gone down to the tomb of its glory. Other races come in upon its soil, perhaps—plant their standards—commence their upward work—catch something of the inspirations of greatness from the grandeur and glory and refine-

ment of the very temples and tombs which they despoil ; and rise to a commendable manliness, on the ashes of departed glory. This is common. But the down-hill course of blood is never arrested.—Such is history. Its tale may be sad, but its lesson is deeply instructive.

Now most of the subjects of Foreign Mission effort are just such men. They are *worse* than their ancestors. They are degenerated or degenerating people. They are not on the rise, but on the decline ;—if indeed they have not become already as debased as sin can make them. At any rate, there is no advancement among them. If they are not sinking, they certainly are not improving. Centuries have rolled over them, and they have continued the same, or gone down deeper into the abysses of ignorance, superstition and mental littleness and inactivity. They propose to themselves nothing. Every man among them expects to live and die, in the same misery and degradation as his fathers have lived and died before him. Hence, not only the improving power of hope is gone, (which always tends to human advancement,) but genius itself is extinguished. It originates nothing. It only copies at best. You may find among them talents ; but they are only perverted and misapplied talents. You may find art, cunning, treachery, falsehood ;—but you look in vain for any thing that tends upwards. What *mind* they have, is applied to the worst objects and in the worst modes ;—not merely as beings of conscience, but as beings of intellect and social existence : it is devoted under the narrow influences of an indolent and supreme selfishness. Their *heart* has lost every high and generous feeling. *Conscience*, with them, is almost nothing but fear. And thus *all* their character and tendencies and habits are embarked to resist every one of the influences, not only of spiritual religion, but of ordinary manliness.—We pity them—pray for them—ask you to aid them—*know that the gospel can elevate and save them*. But in more earnest accents, we ask you to aid a more promising race,—the vigorous, onward, manly, rushing population of your own growing West. *They* are not

the fallen and indolent masses of the old world, now on the down-hill of decline, or already hopeless and unmanned at the bottom. They are not that rudeness which contemns improvement—not the barbarians of the North, Goths or Visigoths, come to despoil the refinement of Imperial Rome, and trample her glories in the dust :—if they *were*, you would have more prospect of good in attempting to Christianize them, than in attempting to regenerate the moveless mass of the older nations. But, they are the enterprise of New England—the warm blood of affectionate Ireland—the granite character of classic, mindful, discriminating Scotland. Such men are good for something. Convert them to Christ, and they will be your *best helpers*, and stand with you shoulder to shoulder, in pushing on the triumphs of the conquering gospel. If, as men, they are better than the effeminacy, the debasement, the indolence of the old world ; they would also be better as Christians, and strike with a mightier arm, among

“The sacramental host of God’s elect.”

How much this idea should have influence in *directing* your charities, we cannot tell. We do not know. It certainly should have influence in *eliciting* them. We leave it to your own judgment, as you act on the rule, to do that, which you think will do most good, when God has left you to your own discretion.

We do not present this idea, remember, to call *off* any of your liberality from distant people, but to call *out* your liberality towards those near by. Your most efficient helpers will be found among such people as you aid this morning. If you need help, if you cannot do all you would for the kingdom of God ; *convert the West !* Once evangelized, its character, piety and wealth will double your means of good.

There may be something in this idea not very pleasant. We confess there seems to be. But we are not afraid to preach it, or afraid to have you consider it. We trust it can be weighed candidly and prayerfully. It may seem unpleasant to us, to pass by any, that are peculiarly degraded and

miserable, for a single year; and direct our aims at all on the principle of giving the gospel to men, who, when they have got it, will do most to give the gospel to others. But what can we do? We have not the means to do every thing at once. We want aid. Are we not to act somewhat on the principle of taking that course, which shall evangelize the world the soonest? and therefore does not pity towards the degraded millions of another hemisphere require of us, to lend a strong hand *first* to our own West, that the West may help us to save them?

We know souls may be equally precious. And we would not, if we could help it, overlook, for a single hour, the most degraded mortal to be found, among the indolent and vicious and un-manned humanity of the heathen world. We know, the Saviour had compassion, and we are to have compassion, upon the most worthless. But for doing good to this world of souls, we cannot but think it a very different thing, to convert an independent yeoman on the banks of the Mississippi; from what it would be to convert a Hottentot on the sands of Africa, or a half-mindless Hindoo on the banks of the Ganges or the Berham-pooter. The one is a different man from the other. Converted he will be a different Christian. In character and circumstances, there is almost a measureless distance between them.—*Save the Hottentot—save the Hindoo*;—but neglect not to call into the army of God the character and the coming means of the West.—Give what force to the idea your own judgment assigns to it. We present it, as we do all the other ideas of this sermon, only to invite you to think for yourselves.

5. As you attempt to push the triumphs of the Gospel among the heathen, commonly it costs very much of study and time and labor, to break down the systems of falsehood. You *must* break down, before you can build up. The people are not vacant of religion, and waiting for it. They have one. It is endeared to them and fastened upon them, by a thousand familiar forms and usages interwoven with all their feelings, all their government, all their ordinary habits of life

and all their hopes, and extending through the whole framework of both society and character. False religions, hallowed by their antiquity—revered as the gift of departed ancestors—supported by government and custom—falling in with the influence of native and nurtured depravity ; these false religions must be *shown* to be false, before the Christian Missionary can have access to the heathen mind. Through this thick rubbish he must work his way. It is laborious and difficult work. It costs much time and labor. You cannot *expect* him to accomplish so much ; as if half of his life and more than half of his energies had not to be expended in breaking down a system, which blocks up the avenue to the heathen's heart.

There is not a destitute place on the globe, where the people are so ripe to receive the gospel and ready to profit by it, as in the Home Mission field of our country. It is not a region of idolatry. The people are not prejudiced against Christianity. They do not regard as an enemy or with suspicion the minister of God you send to them. They hail his approach. They cling to him, ready to share with him the last crust. So much is this the case, that a Missionary cannot tear himself from them. And it is very certain, that there is no class of Gospel Ministers in the world, who work so hard, and live so poor, and suffer so much, as your Home Missionaries. The people have little to give to support them, but they will not let them go ;—and those men who love Christ, cannot bear to leave his children when they plead with tears, “stay, stay with us and teach us the way to heaven.”

Millions in your own country are this moment as ready to receive the gospel, as the most of the heathen can be brought to be, after years of labor and thousands of expense. The way is ready. There is no heathen system to break down. You are invited to go in and possess the land.—However much we may admire that Christian heroism, which will be staggered at no difficulties—which will undertake a work for God's love and the love of souls the more readily, *because* it is arduous ; we cannot tell on what principle, those who are

the *most* ready to receive the gospel and profit by it, should be the most *neglected*. Paul did not act on this principle. To the objecting and prejudiced Jews he said, "lo, we turn to the Gentiles."

If we neglect for a little while the now open field of our country ; obstacles to gospel salvation will be built up there, more dreadful perhaps, than the obstacles of heathenism. Papacy, as a *religion* for men, is a worn out system in Europe. It has little hope of living there much longer, except by the *ungodly device of being linked with national governments*. It will try hard to entrench itself in the West. It is trying. Let it once set up its dominion of blindness and bigotry there ; and that field will be open to receive the gospel of truth no longer ! The obstacles of Papacy will be as bad as the obstacles of heathenism !—Is it right, to leave a region, so ready for spiritual religion, exposed to such a withering curse ?

And if we want any proof of the open and ripe condition of our Home Mission field ; we may find it in the history of past successes,—a history now filling out, every day, in letters of living light.

In the churches aided by the General Assembly's Board of Missions, there were received, according to the Reports, on the *profession of their faith*,

In the year ending May	1842,	2,000	persons.
„	„	1841,	1,800 „
„	„	1840,	1,650 „
„	„	1839,	1,400 „
„	„	1838,	1,360 „
„	„	1837,	1,680 „

on an average 1,648 persons every year, for six years.

There were received on the *profession of their faith*, into the communion of the churches aided by the American Home Missionary Society,

In the year ending May	1842,	3,446	persons.
„	„	1841,	2,860 „
„	„	1840,	2,840 „

In the year ending May 1839,	2,500	persons.
„ „ 1838,	3,376	„
„ „ 1837,	3,752	„
„ „ 1836,	3,750	„
„ „ 1835,	3,330	„
„ „ 1834,	2,736	„
„ „ 1833,	4,284	„
„ „ 1832,	6,126	„
„ „ 1831,	2,532	„

There were received therefore 41,502 in twelve years. On an average 3,458 every year, for twelve years. We have run back upon these twelve years, in order to show you, not only the extent, but the uniformity of the divine blessing.

Your own Mission field is ripe for the gospel. Your Missionaries are not called on so much to clear away the rubbish, as to build up the temple of God—to convert souls to Christ. If it is right for you to work first, where you can do most good; you ought to send forth *more laborers* into this field already whitened for the harvest of the kingdom.

7. The same amount of expense and labor will bring the gospel into contact with more souls in your own settlements, than in any other destitute region.

We are in want of means—of men, to convert the world. Economy certainly is no crime; and we have a right to think of it in religion.—You can reach the field of Home Missions without crossing the ocean. Your Missionary needs no ships, and but a little time, to get to his work. The people to whom he preaches partially support him. One Missionary in service costs you but about a hundred dollars a year. For that little sum, he preaches the gospel to those, who, without your liberality, could not hear it; and reaches more souls with the offers of salvation, than the like expense and time could *so well* reach, anywhere else. When means are limited, and we cannot do everything at once; we know of no reason, why we should not labor most and first, where

we may expect most and speediest and best fruits of our labor. We know of no reason, why men should refuse a hundred dollars a year to bring the gospel in contact with a thousand souls in Wisconsin or Iowa; and appropriate *six* hundred to bring it into similar contact with *half* that number in Africa or Asia.—For neither Asia nor Africa have we done too much; but, for riper fields and readier souls *at home*, we have done too little.

Finally, There is a peculiarity in the *field*, where your Home Missionaries are laboring, which deserves your deepest reflection. There, society is rising—character is forming, to give impress, not merely to an *equal* number, who, in a coming generation, shall rise up on the same field when the present generation is dead; but to give impress, and transmit their religion or their impiety to a vastly *greater* number. A little done now is worth more than a great deal done a little while hence.

It is a very different thing, to pour the gospel and its good influences into a region where society is forming, manners and principles taking their direction, foundations and habits just assuming their shape, and the population vastly increasing; from what it is to do the same thing under entirely opposite circumstances. Among the dense population of India and China, for example; if you convert a hundred souls, their influence is not going to be the same on the coming generation, as the influence of a hundred souls converted in Illinois, Wisconsin or Iowa. Society is formed and habits fixed, and population as dense as it is likely to be, in those old countries. A region evangelized there *now*, will only be about the same region evangelized a century hence: It can hold and feed no more; and the present generation will transmit their religion to just about as numerous a generation to come after them. Not so, in your infant and growing West. There population increases to out-strip the calculations of the most enthusiastic, and stagger even credulity itself. And it extends, too, onwards into new States and Territories, in a manner that the most profound of your

statesmen never anticipated. Nineteen years since, President Monroe, desirous to have the Indians as separate as could well be from the whites, proposed to colonize those North of the Ohio and East of the Mississippi, in the wilderness region now called Wisconsin. He deemed that region so remote, that it could not be wanted for the occupation of the white man, for a long time to come. But now, not only that, but another Territory beyond it, Iowa, also, has sprung into existence, and both are just ready to come in and take their place, among the sister States of the Union.—In all the States and Territories North of the Ohio and West of the Mississippi, in the year 1830, there was a population of 1,840,000: in 1840, there was a population of 3,450,000. Almost doubled in ten years!—Fifty years ago, if you had drawn a line through Pittsburgh, North to lake Erie, and South along the Allegany and Cumberland mountains down to the Gulf of Mexico; all the white population *West* of that line would not have equalled 250,000. More than 6,000,000 are there now! An increase of twenty four fold in fifty years!

The number of souls in your nation, your home, increases beyond all example. The population doubles in about twenty three years.

That population was in 1840, - - 17,000,000 .

If it continues to increase as formerly, it will be

in 1850, - - 22,000,000 ;

in 1860, - - 30,200,000 ;

in 1870, - - 40,300,000 ;

At the close of this century it will become 95,500,000 ;

A hundred years from this time, about - 276,000,000 .

—The mind falters ! we are lost in this ocean of numbers !

We cannot tell where this increase shall stop. It must stop somewhere. But we see no reason, why its onward march should be arrested, or even checked, till it has overpassed the Rocky Mountains and gone down to the Pacific.

When we are solicited in behalf of the old countries of the East, desirous to understand our work, we open the map of

nations. Land after land comes up before us, and the population is millions piled on millions. We are astounded at the magnitude of the appeal. We feel called upon, (as far as we can,) to let our liberality be measured by the numbers that call for it. So we ought to feel. But let us not feel the Eastern argument alone. It EQUALLY comes from the West.—We say *equally*. We mean so.—It may be very pleasant to speak of giving a preached gospel to all the present generation of the world ; but it is not very truthful. It will not be. It cannot be. Miracles alone could do it. And as we can only make a beginning now, and expect thereby to benefit the future millions which shall rise, when the present generation is gone ;—therefore, the *mighty cry of these ocean millions comes as deep and loud and astounding from our own land, as from any other the sun shines on !* AS FAST as we can reach them, we have millions at home. Oh ! that we had more means, and more grace, and more *self-denial*, to respond to the arithmetic of their plea !

We have done. We leave these arguments to your own mind—to your more mature consideration and your prayers. While the Holy Ghost is descending upon your Zion and your own children are converted ; remember the children of the wide West, who have no man to preach unto them “Jesus Christ and him crucified.”—“Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me ?—feed my lambs.”

Have we not good reason for maintaining, that there is no other land the sun visits, to which it is so important to give the gospel and its good influences NOW ; as it is to give them to the growing and wondrous region, for which you contribute this morning ? Millions of the Pagan nations can grow no worse—your own unevangelized millions may.—We repeat it ; we would not withdraw anything from your charities for other countries ; but we would not have you forget,—yea, we would have you more liberally remember your own. Most solemnly we believe, that the cause of Home Missions is *more neglected*, according to the just principles which should guide us, than any other of the prominent

objects which come before us. Aid it, as God has given you ability.

All the interests of our country call on us to aid powerfully the object before us. Our only hope is in the gospel and its influences. The resources of this wonderful land may yet be its curse. Virtue and freedom and religion have sometimes been obliged to flee from the riches of the plains, and hide themselves in the poverty and munition of rocks. It may be so again; and the very soil we boast, trodden by an ungodly generation, may fall under the vengeful chastisements of an insulted God. It remains to be seen, whether this great nation shall be great in grace, or great in wickedness. One or the other it will be. Our condition and resources will have their effect. Our agriculture and commerce, our science and literature, our enterprize, skill, arts, freedom and trade will yet rear to giant growth the worst passions of our fallen nature; or, sanctified by the gospel, help on the kingdom of God. If this shall be an impious land, where violence and lawlessness and indolence and dishonesty shall prevail; its blessings will be turned into curses,—it will be blasted with the judgments of the Most High God!—If the gospel shall triumph, and the Holy Spirit descend upon its borders, no heart can measure the felicity of its coming generations. God will dwell here. And its future millions as they rise will transmit their blessings to their posterity, and extend to every land the sun shines on, the virtue, the liberty, the intelligence, peace and immortal hope of the kingdom of God.

As you pray, “thy kingdom come,”—as you aim to speed its coming, forget not your own country. Waiting multitudes look eagerly for help. Your Christian bounty may cheer many a sad heart; and many a grateful prayer may be lifted to the Most High, to call down blessings on your heads and the heads of your children after you.—God grant, that you may yet meet in the high fellowship of heaven, redeemed souls, aided by this morning’s bounty, to that blissful and everlasting abode.—Amen.