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DELIVERED BEFORE THE BOARD OF FOREIGN MISSIONS OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, AT AN ANNUAL MEETING OF THE BOARD, IN THE WALL-STREET CHURCH, NEW-YORK, MAY 6, 1844.

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My Christian Friends:—The cause of Evangelical Missions is, beyond all controversy, the most important and interesting cause in the world. Is the state of all mankind, by nature, a state of sin and misery? Is their restoration to holiness and happiness the most precious blessing that we can contemplate or devise for their well-being? And, is the religion of Jesus Christ the only means which God has provided, and which we can make known to them, for securing that well-being? Then, surely, to send that un-speakable gift to those who are destitute of it, is the richest, noblest boon that we can possibly bestow upon them. What are all the treasures that earthly bounty can offer to rational, accountable, dying creatures, compared with this? I know, indeed, that, in the eye of the worldly politician, there are many things of far more thrilling interest than the salvation of souls; than even the conversion of the whole world to God. But even the worldly politician, when seriously interrogated on the subject, will readily acknowledge that his judgment of the subject is miserably erroneous. He will not attempt to justify it; but will confess that his estimate is rather one of the depraved taste, of the unsanctified heart, than a deliberate dictate of the understanding. What are all the wealth and splendour of this world—which, after all, are but the pageant of a day—when compared with the never-ending happiness, even of a single soul; and, above all, when compared with the never-ending happiness of that “great multitude which no man can number, gathered out of every kindred and people, and nation and tongue,” and made perfectly blessed in the full enjoyment of God to all eternity?

And yet, my Christian friends, plain and indisputable as this principle is, how far have we really *felt* and *acted* upon it? Alas! it is painful to bring our hearts and our conduct to this practical test. The Church of Christ has had this glorious Gospel in her hands for more than eighteen hundred years; and has possessed during all that time, ample means for spreading the knowledge of it; and yet not more than one-quarter part of all the population of the Globe has ever, to this hour, seen the Christian's Bible, or heard of the Christian's Saviour! And over this melancholy fact, a large part of the Christian world is now slumbering and sleeping. We profess to believe that the whole human family are in a state of ruin and degradation, and that there is “no other name given under heaven, among men, whereby they can be saved, but the name of Jesus Christ.” And although there is wealth enough in this one city to send out and sustain all the men that our missionary Board could engage in this hallowed work, yet here we are, cramped, enfeebled, and utterly unable to send some (small as the number is) that might be employed; some who are willing to take their lives in their hands, and to go forth bearing the light of life to the benighted and the perishing. O my Christian friends! how is this to be reconciled with the spirit of Christ? Where is our love to the Saviour and his kingdom? Where is our pity for dying souls? If they were dying with famine of bodily aliment,

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I know you would be all alive to the task of loading ships, and sending food for their starving bodies. You would even cheerfully divide with them your last loaf. But when the souls of millions are dying, and we know it, and have in our possession the Bread of life, and are able to send it to them, scarcely a hand is seen to move for their help. We can listen to the melancholy story of their deplorable condition with almost as much apathy as if it were known to be a fable! O brother, sister in the Lord! what shall we say to this? Dost thou call thyself a disciple of Christ? and hast thou no feeling, no desire, no willingness to make the least sacrifice for this great object? Art thou ready, without stint or hesitation, to expend hundreds, or perhaps thousands, on useless luxuries; and art thou reluctant to give the price of a few dinners for sending the light of life to the heathen? Where, O where is the evidence that thou art animated with one particle of the spirit of those primitive believers who were willing to give up all for Christ?

Instead of regarding it as a burden, we ought to consider it as a privilege, and a high honour, that this work of evangelizing the world is committed to us. If it had pleased God, he might have made angels his missionaries, and miracles his means of grace. But it pleased him, in the exercise of infinite wisdom, and of tender mercy to us, to employ the Church in accomplishing this great work. The infinitely precious treasure of the Gospel is committed, not to beings of a higher order, but to "earthen vessels,"—not only that "the excellency of the power might be of God, and not of us;" but also that we might ourselves receive essential benefit by the very performance of the work. He who "made man, and knew what was in him," saw that employing men for effecting the conversion of their fellow-men is adapted to confer a benefit on the agents themselves; to enlighten their minds; to warm their hearts; to bind them to the Saviour; to deepen their sense of interest in the Redeemer's kingdom. The fact is, all the activity of the Church in sending the Gospel to the heathen, tends to re-act, in the most happy manner, on herself. The more she labours, and gives, and prays for the conversion of the world, the more she exercises and manifests the spirit of Christ; the more, of course, her own faith, and love, and spiritual health are increased, and her spiritual prosperity and enjoyment established. It has been well said, that the religion of Christ is a treasure so perfectly unique and wonderful in its character, that the more of it we send abroad, the more of it we invariably have at home.

Settle it in your minds, then, that if you wish for "times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord" to descend on yourselves, your children, and your beloved Zion, you cannot adopt a more direct method of drawing down that blessing, than by engaging in good earnest in spreading the knowledge of salvation to your fellow-men; than by doing all in your power to send the bread and the waters of life to the destitute and the perishing. Try the experiment, and if you are feeble, it will strengthen you; if you are languid and cold, it will be the means of rousing you to feeling, and zeal, and sacred energy. Every sincere prayer you offer for the conversion of the heathen; every contribution you bestow in faith; every benevolent effort you make for the spread of the Gospel, will return with blessings into your own bosom. In "watering" others, you will be watered yourselves. In labouring to bring others to the Saviour, you will draw nearer to him yourselves, and gain a more endearing resemblance to Him, day by day.

The Church of Christ, for a short time after the Master ascended to glory, was eminently a missionary Church. As long as this continued to be the case, she prospered. Yes, though all the powers of the world were leagued against her, and conspired to destroy her,—she prospered. The pulse of her spiritual life beat strong. Her borders were rapidly extended. Her conquests over the powers of darkness were gloriously multiplied. But whenever, and just as far, as her missionary spirit declined, she suffered loss both in her purity and her life. In losing her zeal for the spread of the Gospel, like *Samson* of old, when shorn of his locks, she lost her strength. Her piety declined—Her zeal for the truth declined. Her union and harmony declined, and every thing that was adapted to make her a blessing to the world, gave place to corruption, strife, secularity, and spiritual desolation. Does not every one, on the slightest glance, see that it *must be so*?

What is the essence of real religion? Is it not love to God;—love to the Saviour;—love to his kingdom;—and love to the souls of men? And is it not perfectly evident that neither any man nor any church can have much of these, without having a corresponding portion of missionary spirit? As an *animal body* cannot live in health without appropriate food and exercise; so a *spiritual body* cannot possibly be strong and flourishing without that aliment and employment which properly belong to it as a body, essentially, and in its very nature, set apart for the great work of diffusing abroad Gospel truth, for purifying and saving the souls of men.

Christian brethren! Let the efforts and the sacrifices which the children of this world are ever ready to make for their favourite objects, put to shame our comparative indifference in the greatest of all causes. The sons of avarice and of ambition are ever ready to deny themselves, and to encounter the dangers of pestilential climates, and even the terrors of the battle-field, for the sake of mammon and of fame. The children of pleasure rise early, and sit up late—nay, compass sea and land, and grudge no expense to attain their beloved gratifications. O, if those who call themselves by the name of Christ, in the Presbyterian Church alone, were willing to take half the pains, and to incur half the expenditure in sending the Gospel to the heathen, which they cheerfully incur in the purchase of indulgences which are poison both to soul and body, we might multiply ten-fold, nay, twenty-fold, our missionaries, and all our other means for the salvation of benighted millions.

Let me ask, my Christian friends, what are your feelings, when you see such large portions of the heathen world not only wide open to the Christian missionary, but some of them importunately begging him to come to them, and instruct them in the way of salvation? What say you who call yourselves the disciples of Christ, to the empire of CHINA? Look upon it in all its mighty bounds, and its immense swarm of inhabitants, comprehending at least a third, if not nearer one-half the whole population of the globe;—look upon it, now so far open to the ministers of Christ, that one hundred missionaries might be profitably employed there, if we had the men to send, and the means of sustaining them in their work. Can the disciples of Christ think of turning their backs on a field so immense, so white to the harvest, and so richly promising? Can you consent—nay, can you DARE to turn a deaf ear to such a call? Are there not friends enough of the Redeemer's kingdom to say to our beloved and faithful Executive Committee—"Go forward, nothing doubting, and send to that immense field every well-qualified herald of God's mercy that can be persuaded to go?"

Christian brethren! let us, then, arouse from our lethargy, and put forth all our strength, as one man, in this great enterprise of the noblest benevolence;—or rather let us cry mightily to God, that his grace may rouse us; that He would give us a spirit corresponding with the importance of the work, and that his strength may be made perfect in our weakness. Tell me not of your love to the Saviour, while you are willing to do so little for the promotion of his glory. Tell me not of your enjoyment in religion, while you are contented to enjoy it alone, and have no practical concern for those who are perishing for want of it. Beloved friends! by all that is solemn in that command of our ascended Master, which was read this evening in your hearing; by all that is precious in the salvation of immortal souls, let me conjure you to "awake and put on strength" in this holy and blessed cause. Let the young arise, and address themselves to this great work with all the vigour and determination of youthful zeal. Permit us who are old and gray-headed—while we mourn that we have done so little ourselves,—to cherish the well-grounded confidence, that the rising generation will be far more enterprising and zealous in this noble work, than we have ever been; and that when we shall be called to take leave of the field of labour here below, and to give an account of our stewardship, we may see so many pledges that our children will be more faithful and successful than ourselves, that we may go with the language of pious old *Simeon* bursting from joyful lips, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servants depart in peace, according to thy word, for our eyes have seen thy salvation!" God grant it! Amen! and Amen!