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THE MISSIONARY RULE:

A DISCOURSE:

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2 Cor. x. 15, 16.—“Having hope, when your faith is increased, that we shall be enlarged by you, according to our rule abundantly, to preach the Gospel in the regions beyond you.”

In the prosecution of great enterprises it is all-important, to proceed according to some well defined and established rule. And this remark is especially applicable to those enterprises, which depend for their success upon combined or associated action. A mutual understanding, as to the rule of proceeding, is necessary, here, not only to prevent confusion, in the way of counter-courses of effort, but also as a means of concentrating the common affection, and thereby swelling the tide of a common interest, in reference to the attainment of the same end.

In the greatest of all associated enterprises—which is that of evangelizing the world—there is one distinguishing feature, which makes this remark apply with peculiar force; and that is, the relation it sustains to the blessing of God, as the efficient cause of all the prosperity which attends it. The plans and labours of the church are nothing, without the concurrence of divine power; and the economy of God, in the dispensation of his grace, is such, that his presence and aid are to be expected only in connexion with united, fervent, and persevering prayer. “Prayer, also, shall be made for Him continually,” is the language of prophecy, in foreshowing the progress and perpetuity of the Messiah’s reign. In
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short, it is *in prayer*, that the friends of this cause are ever to find the great secret of their success. And, as a means of producing that union of heart, and singleness of purpose in prayer, which are likely to be successful, it is meet that they should “walk by the same rule;” that they should “mind the same thing;”—that their views of the nature and magnitude of the work, and the mode of accomplishing it, should be substantially alike—that they should see with a common eye—feel with a common heart—and call upon God with a common determination to give him no rest, till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth.

In the light of these observations, then, I propose, on this occasion, to introduce to your notice, **THE RULE**, or line of proceeding, which was adopted by the Pioneers in the Foreign Missionary work; and which is remarkable, at once, for the simplicity and the grandeur of the conception which it involves.—The Apostle refers to it, here, in connexion with his own labours; and the line of these labours, as stretched from place to place and from country to country, affords a sufficient illustration, not only of the nature of the rule, theoretically, but also of the stupendous results, which an adherence to it, in practice, may always be expected to pro-

duce. He commenced the work of evangelising the world at the city of Jerusalem; and from this, as the starting point, he proceeded through the several countries of Lesser Asia. From Asia, he passed into Macedonia, and lifted up his voice, in the chief cities, in the order in which they stood. He then went to Greece; and, after seeing the fruit of his labour in other places, especially at Athens, he came at last to Corinth, the place at which we now find him. But although, according to the "line," or "measure" of his rule, he had "stretched" himself thus far, he had not yet arrived at the end. There were "regions beyond," into which the line continued to run. He had his eye on the countries of Italy and Spain, which were still farther from the point, at which he entered upon his work; and these fields he must occupy, before he could be "enlarged" to the measure of what the rule demanded. He therefore tarried at Corinth, after establishing the Gospel there—not as the termination of his course—not to put off his armour, and lay down his weapons, as if the battles were all fought, and the victories won—but, only, to give time for their faith and feeling to rise to the point, which was necessary to bear him onward in his course. He depended upon the fruit of the ground he had already cultivated, for the means of his entrance upon other fields—he waited among those, who had been converted under his ministry, until the burning of the fire, in their bosoms, rekindled the flame in his own—and, setting forward, with their faith and prayers united to his own, he bore the precious treasure from one destitute region to another, determined that the line of his exertions should continue to advance, until it was either terminated by death or extended to the end of the world.

The rule, then, which we derive from his example, is, that, IN PROSECUTING THE WORK OF FOREIGN MISSIONS, WE MUST NEVER STOP AT ANY POINT AT WHICH WE HAVE ARRIVED, WHILE THERE ARE REGIONS BEYOND, IN WHICH THE GOSPEL HAS NOT BEEN PREACHED.—This

the apostle calls, "*our rule*"—*ἡμῶν ἡ κανὼν*—our canon, or, the regulation, by which we are governed; including, with himself, his companions in the missionary work.

My farther object will be,

I. To justify this rule, by exhibiting its coincidence with the whole genius and spirit of the Christian system.

II. To use it as a means of determining the present duty of the Church.

III. To consider THE GROUND OF HOPE, in reference to such an enlargement of effort, as it seems to require.

I. In the first place, then, I propose to justify the rule in question, by exhibiting its coincidence with the whole genius and spirit of the Christian system.

And, in order that the line of this coincidence may be traced from the beginning, let us go back to THE FIRST COVENANT, into which God entered with his Church, and see what effects were expected to flow from the blessing, which she was to receive—I mean the covenant of God with Abraham, which was the germ, or root, of all the subsequent dispensations of grace. If the promise of God, to this father of the faithful, had merely been, "I will bless thee," there might have been some plausibility, in supposing that the Church was to have no responsibility, beyond the mere reception and enjoyment of the benefits, which the promise involved. But, when it is added, "and thou shalt be a blessing," we find the principle of the transaction to be, that the Church was to stand, as a medium of blessing, between God and the world—that the treasures of grace, which she was to receive, were not to be exhausted upon herself, but were to flow, through her, as the channel of communication to the rest of mankind—that the cup of salvation was placed in her hands, not that she might drink of its refreshing contents in solitude and selfishness, but that she might hand it round, from family to family, and from nation to nation, until the offer was made to all the inhabitants of the earth.—There can be no doubt, as to the correctness of this interpretation, because the promise goes on to

say, "in thee shall *all families of the earth* be blessed." The same phraseology is repeated, in the ratification of the covenant with Isaac and Jacob, as well as in the references, which are made to this transaction, in other parts of the Bible. It is clear, too, that the import of this phraseology was well understood by all the pious posterity of these Patriarchs, not excepting those who lived under the subsequent reign of the ceremonial law. That law was, indeed, restrictive in some respects; but even this restrictive policy was intended, at last, for the benefit of the world. The temple at Jerusalem was called, the house of prayer for all nations; and those who came up to its courts, with a right understanding of the nature and design of the dispensation under which they lived, never expected to be blessed, exclusively, on their own account, or on account of the nation to which they belonged, but, also, on account of others, to the full extent of the entire population of the earth. Accordingly, it was the language of their united and fervent prayer, "God be merciful to us and bless us, and cause his face to shine upon us, *that thy way be known upon the earth, thy saving health among all nations.*" Here, then, we begin to see the evidence of the rule in question: the line of our endeavours to spread the Gospel, can never be commensurate with the line of the purpose, for which the church of God was established, until it reaches the remotest habitation of all the nations and families of the earth.

Nor would any shorter line than this be commensurate with the rule, which is prescribed in the language and tenor of **ПРОРЧЕСУ**, as contained, either in the Old Testament, or in the New. Men have been raised up, in different ages, to whom the future has been revealed; and in reporting their visions, they have dwelt largely upon the plans and purposes of God, in respect to the going forth, and the effects of his word. However little they have said upon other topics, they have dwelt largely upon this; and in reference to the extent to which the light and blessings of his revealed will are to

circulate, they have seen with a common eye, and have therefore expressed themselves in a common language. Whether afar off from the scene which they describe, or comparatively near, they all describe it as a scene, the mild, but radiant glories of which are to encircle and cover the earth. David sees the kingdom of the Messiah extending, "from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth;"—Isaiah anticipates the day, when "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea;"—Jeremiah foresees the time, when "all the nations shall be gathered unto the name of the Lord; neither shall they walk any more after the imagination of their evil heart;"—Daniel beholds "all people, nations, and languages," serving Him, whose "dominion is an everlasting dominion," and whose kingdom is that which shall not be destroyed;"—Micah sees "the mountain of the house of the Lord, established in the top of the mountains, and exalted above the hills," and "many nations" coming to it, to learn of his ways, and walk in his paths;"—Malachi predicts, that the name of God "shall be great among the Gentiles," and that "from the rising of the sun, even unto the going down of the same," "incense and a pure offering shall be offered unto his name;"—Paul hears the "sound" of the Gospel, going out "into all the earth," and its "words unto the ends of the world;"—John describes an angel, flying in the midst of heaven, "having the everlasting Gospel, to preach to them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people;" and he follows this angel, in its flight, until he sees, that "the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ."—Our spirit, therefore, is not the spirit of the holy Prophets, if we aim at any thing less than the universal spread of the Gospel. We cannot stop short of this consummation, without shortening the line, and thereby mutilating the rule according to which it is our duty to walk.

But I plead, still farther, in justification

of this rule, the express language of **THE COMMISSION**, given by our Lord to his disciples, on the eve of his departure from earth to heaven. Anterior to his death and resurrection, although the treasure of salvation, as we have seen, had been deposited with the Church, for the use of the world, nothing of consequence had been done, in the way of its distribution. Up to this time, all the operations of the Church of God had been confined to the domestic field. Even the ministry of Jesus himself, for wise purposes, had extended no farther than to "the lost sheep of the house of Israel." But this restrictive action was not to be considered as indicating the genius of the dispensation, which he came to introduce. In the final purposes and effects of his mission, he was to be "a light to lighten the Gentiles," as well as the glory of the people Israel. And, having broken down the middle wall of partition, by the sacrifice of himself upon the cross, he called his disciples around him, after his resurrection, and said, "Go, and teach *all nations*"—"Go ye into *all the world*, and preach the Gospel to *every creature*." The day for, exclusively, domestic operations, was now past. Divine truth was no longer to be monopolised by a single people. The leaves of the tree, which had grown upon the soil of Canaan, were now to be scattered, for the healing of the nations. The Apostles were to begin their work at Jerusalem; and, from this point, the line of their labours was to go out, and extend, until it reached the remotest corners of the earth, in which human beings were found to exist.—And, here, it must be remembered, that their commission was accompanied by a promise, which, in the tenor of its language, reaches to the end of time—"Lo, I am with you always," says Christ, "even unto *the end* of the world." This proves that the responsibility, created by the commission, was not to run out in them; but was to lie upon the ministry of the New Testament Church, as long as the Church should exist, and any part of the world should remain unvisited by the light of the Gospel. It is, therefore,

a commission *to us*, as well as to them: it is, as really, *our* commission, as it would have been, if we had stood beside the first heralds of the cross, on the mountain in Galilee, and the eye of the Saviour had been upon our eye, when he delivered the important charge.—By the Great Head of the Church himself, therefore, the rule under consideration is enjoined upon us: we dare not at the peril of forfeiting his approbation, allow the line of our work to stop, until it reaches as far as the line of the commission under which we are appointed to act.

But let us now follow the departing Saviour, from the place of his last interview with his disciples upon earth, to his mediatorial throne;—let us look up, and see him seated, as king upon the holy hill of Zion;—and let us judge of the rule in question, within hearing of "*the decree*," which is there published, in respect to **THE PURPOSE AND RESULTS OF HIS EXALTATION**. He himself speaks from the throne, and says, "I will *declare* the decree"—and, it is to this effect—"The Lord hath said unto me, thou art my son; this day, have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I shall give thee *the heathen* for thine inheritance and *the uttermost parts of the earth* for thy possession." In reference to his high position, at the right hand of God, it is, elsewhere, said, that "he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet"—that God "hath highly exalted him," "that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow," and "that every tongue should confess," that he "is Lord to the glory of God the Father." The unlimited dominion, which is thus described, was the promised recompense of his humiliation and sufferings. It was "the joy that was set before him," when he "endured the cross, despising the shame." It was, "the brook in the way," of which he drank, and which enabled him to lift up his head, when worn out by the toils and trials of his life. But, the promise has, thus far, been fulfilled only in part. The stipulated reward is, still, to a great extent, in the hands of the enemy. "Now, we see *not yet* all things put un-

der him." In many parts of the earth, and especially in the heathen world, the usurper still reigns. The strong man armed keeps his palace. And, in the work of binding and casting him out, the subjects of Zion's king are commanded to come forth to his help, to his help against the mighty. All who profess to be his friends, are, in virtue of this profession, a part of the army that have taken the field in defence of his interests; and the line of their march, and victories, must never stop, until the strong-holds of the enemy are all demolished, until his forces are all routed and dispersed, and the standard of the cross waves in triumph in the breezes of every clime. This is the consummation to which He himself looks; and those who allow the line of their service for him to terminate before it reaches this point, are failing to co-operate, as they should, in procuring his expected reward, and in carrying out the purpose which his exaltation was intended to answer.

Nor can any other rule than this be made to agree with the spirit of that **LAW OF LOVE**, which is so often enjoined in the Bible, and which forms such a distinguishing characteristic of the religion of Jesus. "The end of the commandment, is charity"—"Love, is the fulfilling of the law"—"Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." And what is it that such charity or love demands of us, in the relation we sustain to those who are without the Gospel? Does it permit us to circumscribe the field of our benevolent labours, by any other limit than the circumference of the earth? Does it allow us to stop, when we have conveyed the tidings of salvation to some nations, while other nations are still perishing in their sins? Or, does it require us to proceed from region to region, until there are "no regions beyond," in which charity can have a work to do? The whole world, in the eye of this law of love, is but one neighbourhood. Each individual is the neighbour of every other one, who is in want or distress, provided he possesses the means of ameliorating his condition. This is the principle of the law, as interpreted by the Great

Teacher himself. And, by this principle, we, who have the Gospel, are placed in the relation of almoners, to the rest of mankind. We have that which they need, and which they must have, or be miserable forever. We have the bread of life, and they are perishing with hunger. We have a sovereign balm which can heal the maladies of human nature, and they are dying in ignorance of its existence and virtue. We have a light, which guides through the darkness of this world to regions of felicity and glory in the world to come, and they are walking in darkness, uncertainty, and fear. And if, in dispensing this precious treasure to others, we allow any geographical line to cross and obstruct the path of our labours, we dishonour the law of our Master; we cramp the energies of the vital principle, from which he requires us to act; we put out the fires of that sacred flame, which ought to spread and burn with increasing intensity, until the means of salvation are transmitted to the ends of the earth.

And to this I shall only add, that the spirit of the rule of which we now speak, is the pervading spirit of all the authorised **SONGS AND SUPPLICATIONS OF THE CHURCH** on earth, as well as of **THE NEW SONG**, which is to be sung by the glorified in heaven. "O Lord our Lord! How excellent is thy name in *all the earth!*" "Let the people praise thee, O God; yea, let *all the people* praise thee!" "God shall bless us, and *all the ends of the earth* shall fear him!" "Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things. And blessed be his glorious name for ever: and let *the whole earth* be filled with his glory. Amen, and Amen." This is the language which the Spirit of God puts into the mouths of his people, to be used on earth. This is what they are to say to one another, and to him, in their psalms and hymns, and spiritual songs, as well as in their addresses at the throne of his grace. And, if the line of their efforts is to run parallel with their prayers and praises, as thus expressed, it never can stop, until the remotest corners of the earth are reached, and brought under "the light of

the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ."—And who are they, that bear the principal part in the new song which is sung by the glorified in heaven! They are "the hundred and forty and four thousand, who were redeemed from the earth." And "whence come they?" Not, exclusively, from the Holy Land, where the religion of the Bible at first existed and prevailed; not from England and America, and other Christian countries, where the Gospel has thus far been preached; not from those parts of the heathen world, in which Christian missions have been established, and are now in successful progress; but "out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation." As we desire therefore to be instrumental, in filling up the choir of heaven, and preparing the way for the commencement of this song, we must let the line of our activity, in spreading the Gospel, go out into all the earth. We must never stop while the people of any country or community remain unrepresented among the worshippers in the upper Temple; for, as long as this is the case, the number of the choir is deficient, and the song cannot begin.

Without adverting, then, to many other particular views, which might be pressed into the same service, we may regard the foregoing as sufficient to justify, to the fullest extent, the rule, according to which the first heralds of the cross proceeded in their endeavours to evangelise the world.

And, while standing in the light of this rule, *what becomes of the ground taken by those professing Christians, who object, in principle, to the enterprise of Foreign Missions?*—who look upon this enterprise with suspicion and distrust—who regard it as of doubtful propriety and feasibility—and who, therefore, turn away with indifference and coldness from all applications, which are made for personal activity, self-denial, and charity, in carrying it forward? Whatever else may be said of them, it is plain that they assume an antagonist position to "the mind of the Spirit," as expressed in the uniform tenor of God's revelation to man. Their eyes are

not open to the true import and demands of their high vocation by the Gospel of Christ. They see not, in the proper light, either the purpose for which the Church of God was established, or the results contemplated in the visions of all the prophets, or the duty involved in the commission of Christ to his disciples, or the obligation imposed by the law of charity and good-will to men, or the position taken in the worship and praises of the universal Church, both on earth and in heaven.

But I proceed—

II. *To use the rule which the foregoing remarks are intended to define and justify—as a means of determining the present duty of the Church.*

And all that is necessary, here, is simply to inquire, how far the line of exertion, in spreading the Gospel, has been "stretched" by those who have gone before us? Having answered this question, it requires but an easy process of subtraction to conduct us to the desired result. All parts of the earth, in which, at this time, the Gospel is *not* preached, are, to us, what "the regions beyond" Corinth were to the apostle Paul. They are the remaining fields of labour to which we are pointed, by the finger of the rule, which we have just considered; and their extent is *the measure* of the work which God, in his Providence, has given us to do. There is no call for reflection, here, upon the unfaithfulness and inactivity of the preceding generations of the visible Church. There is no need of inquiry into the reasons *why* so large a proportion of the earth remains, at this late day, unevangelised. The fact that there are "regions" remaining, unvisited by the light and salvation of the Gospel, is the only fact with which we are concerned in determining the matter of duty. And that such regions do exist—that they are numerous and extensive—and that they utter, from all directions, loud and affecting calls upon our sympathy and assistance—we have only to lift up our eyes, that we may see, or to open our ears, that we may hear. They sweep, in all directions, over a distance which the eye

cannot measure; and, in many of their parts they are covered with a darkness which may be felt. The gloom of a spiritual night, which is without a star, has settled upon them;—the god of this world reigns over them, with undisturbed dominion—and the myriads of those, who inhabit them, are led captive by him, at his will.

In describing the extent and character of these regions, it were easy to occupy your attention for a much longer time than the limits of this exercise would allow. I content myself, however, with merely requesting you to take the map of the world, and measure for yourselves the comparative space which they occupy. Survey them in their number, their variety, their length, and their breadth—and bring before your minds, the millions, who people their numerous habitations of darkness and cruelty—and you then have before you the field and the sphere of duty which God has assigned to his Church, in this generation. Into these waste places we are commanded to stretch our line. These fields of moral desolation and death, “our rule” requires us to occupy; and, our work will never be done, unless we are discharged from it by death, until every part of this “wilderness” shall become a “fruitful place,” and this “desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose.”

I pass on to consider,

III. THE GROUND OF HOPE, in reference to such an enlargement of effort, as this view of our duty seems to require.

According to the statement of the Apostle, in this passage, our hope must be in the faith of the Church; and, in the faith of the Church, not as to her ministry merely, but in her members also. It is in the form of an address from the ministry to the members; and its language is—“having hope when your faith is increased, that we shall be enlarged by you, according to our rule abundantly, to preach the Gospel in the regions beyond you.”

If there ever was a time, when the ministry of the Church might have been expected to succeed, in the work of evan-

gelising the world, *without* the co-operation of the members, and if there ever was a herald of the cross, whose personal endowments were of such an order as to place him beyond the necessity of assistance from others, that person and time were, certainly, the Apostle Paul, and the day in which he lived. He was above his equals, not only in respect to the native strength, and acquired furniture of his mind, but, also, in respect to the elevation and fervour of his piety. And, like them, he went forth to his work, the possessor of miraculous power, and the dispenser of miraculous gifts. But, though possessing these high advantages, he could not proceed, with confidence, until he was “enlarged” by an influence which he expected from the Church, as a body. He stood upon the confines of the unexplored regions, which were still before him—his eye of compassion resting upon them, and his heart beating high with a desire to occupy them without delay—but unable, in a moral sense, to move, until the Christians around him came to his aid. They must unite with him in the work which remained to be done. They must assist in preparing the way to the scenes of his future labour; they must co-operate with him in removing obstacles, and in providing the means of travel and subsistence;—and they must surround him with such evidence of their sympathy and prayerful regard, as would enable him to proceed with increasing animation, encouragement, and hope. And, surely, if co-operation on the part of the Church, generally, was necessary to the success of the missionary work, when the great Apostle himself was the Missionary, it must be still more important when the labourers in the field are of smaller stature, and are less richly endowed with the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit.

It is then to the Church of Christ, in her collective capacity—including her members, as well as her ministry—that we are to look for the movements which are yet to be made upon the extensive regions of darkness and sin. And, as the apostle had no expectation that the

Church at Corinth would come rightly and fully to his aid, until her faith was increased, it is upon **THE FAITH OF THE CHURCH** that we must finally retire, as forming the last ground of hope for the perishing nations. The Gospel, and the means of its propagation, are with the Church; and an increase of faith is necessary—and it is all that is required—to the universal and speedy accomplishment of the work.

This will appear, with overcoming evidence, if we reflect for a moment upon *the nature* of the instrumentalities, which are necessary to the spread of the Gospel, and then observe how naturally and surely a sufficient increase of faith would produce them, in all their required extent. In regard to some of the subordinate or secondary instrumentalities, which are supposed to be of use in this work, there may be some difference of opinion. But all, who have any sympathy with it, will acknowledge that *two* things, at least, are essential;—we must have *men* in sufficient numbers to preach the Gospel to the unevangelised nations—and we must have *the means* of sending and sustaining them, until they are supplied from among these nations themselves. And while, in both these respects, there is comparatively no hope, as long as the faith of the Church remains where it is, it is easy to see that, when it does rise to its proper height, “the time of the end,” in respect to this enterprise, will be near.

Who can doubt, that there are **MEN** enough in the Christian Church at this moment to convey the tidings of salvation to every nation under heaven, as quickly as the winds could waft them to the places of their destination, only making allowance for the time which would be necessary to acquire the means of communicating with the people in their own tongues. So far as the *persons* of men are concerned, we have them already;—they are present, in this house, in number sufficient to make the Gospel sound across the widest heathen country that now exists, before the generation to which they belong shall have gone to the grave. And what results, in respect to

them, would immediately ensue, if their faith were elevated at the present moment, to the point at which it ought to stand!—if God, by a signal interposition, were now to remove the veil which obscures their spiritual vision, and give them a due impression of the value of the human soul, of the perishing condition of those who are without the Gospel, of the scenes of happiness and wo which eternity is soon to unfold, and of the duty of living supremely to the advancement of the kingdom and the glory of Christ. The operation of such a faith would be to sever, at once, the ties which bind them to earth and home, to kindred and friends, to wealth and worldly pleasure; and, instead of preferring another employment, or having any choice as to their field of labour, they would be prepared to say, in view of any door of usefulness which might open, however distant,—Here are we, Lord, send us! What is wanted in this department, therefore, is not more men, numerically, but only the presence of such a spirit, as strong faith would generate in the hearts of those whose names are already enrolled, in the catalogue of the visible followers of Christ. And, how surely would this spirit come to the hearts of the proper men, in sufficient multitudes, if the prayer of the whole Church, for “more labourers,” were such as a high degree of faith would naturally produce! “The Lord of the harvest” has the superintendence of this part of the missionary work, in a special sense. It is his peculiar prerogative to “send forth labourers;” and his mode of sending them is, in answer to the prayers of his people. For an increase of their number he has invited and commanded us to pray. And this command implies, that he is ready to hear, and willing to bestow the blessing, when, in the exercise of a proper faith, we are prepared to supplicate and receive it. Here, undoubtedly, is one of the main respects, in which the present character and condition of the Church is deficient in its relation to the missionary work. There is but little of the prayer of faith to the Lord of the harvest; and, therefore “the labourers are few.”

And while, in this instrumental way, a sufficiency of faith would abundantly supply the field with labourers, there is, if possible, still less reason to doubt, that it would procure **THE MEANS** of sending and sustaining them to any required extent. The means are not only in existence, but they are within the limits and under the control of the Church, in her officers and members; and an increase of faith is alone needful, to bring them forth. Nay, if the faith of all were equal to what the faith of some already is, the amount of pecuniary contribution to this cause, would be equal to the full measure of the work to be done. As it is, however, professing Christians in general have not even begun to believe and act in relation to this point, under a sense of their responsibility. We characterise this age, indeed, as an age of benevolence;—we talk of the noble enterprises and achievements of the century, through which we are passing,—and, in the comparative sense in which these views are justified by the facts in the case, they are not to be undervalued or despised. But how few are there, after all, who exhibit anything like the spirit which led the first Christians to sell their possessions and lay down the price at the apostles' feet. A literal return of this state of things is not, indeed, demanded, nor would it be desirable; but, the faith that prompted it, is what we need. In that day, there were "none" of the disciples who said, "that ought of the things which he possessed was his own." They held their entire property subject to the demands arising from the cause of God. Their faith in the single magnitude of this cause was such, as to overcome all their attachment to their worldly goods, as intended for any other purpose than to promote it. And when this spirit shall come again to the heart of every member of the visible Church; when the increase of faith shall be such, as to set back the tide of worldliness, which has come in like a flood; when all the followers of Christ shall feel, that He has bought their property for his use, as well as their bodies and souls for his service, there will be means enough to send,

not only a missionary to every neighbourhood on the face of the globe, but the means of Christian education to every circle, a Bible to every family, and a Tract to every individual.

In every view, therefore, there is hope from an increase of faith. Faith has done wonders heretofore, and it can do them again. "Through faith" the Church of God has "subdued kingdoms," "wrought righteousness," "obtained promises," "stopped the mouths of lions," "quenched the violence of fire," and "turned to flight the armies of the aliens." And when that, which produced these effects, shall visit the hearts of her members again, the same achievements and victories will attend her course. By its invigorating influence she will go forth conquering and to conquer—bringing all antagonist powers into subjection to the authority and reign of the Prince of Peace—working out the prevalence of righteousness in all the earth—obtaining all the promises, which relate to the universal propagation of the Gospel—stopping the mouths of gainsayers and despisers of every name—quenching all the fiery darts, which are hurled from the strongholds of sin and Satan—and turning to flight all the armies, which are alien to the interests of that cause, which involves in the highest degree the welfare of man, and the glory of God.

The question, then, which should stand in the foreground of all our inquiries and consultations, as to the best means of advancing the missionary cause, is: **HOW SHALL THE FAITH OF THE CHURCH BE INCREASED?** On the point aimed at in this inquiry, the vital energy of the whole enterprise depends. The strong faith of the Church is the principle, which, under God, is to sustain the movement, and carry it on to perfection. This is the tree, which is to produce the fruit. This is the fountain, from which the streams are to issue, which shall carry life, health, and salvation to the ends of the earth.

In answering the question referred to, I may remark in general, that, while all true faith is efficiently the gift of God, it is bestowed like other spiritual blessings,

in the use of such means, as are adapted to produce it. And, under this general remark, I observe,

1. That, if the faith of the Church is to be greatly increased, *the mind of the Church must be brought into close, frequent and familiar contact with the objects of faith*; especially those objects which stand in immediate connexion with the enterprise of evangelising the world. The great body of those, who name the name of Christ, must have before them, as standing subjects of contemplation, the perishing condition of the heathen—the duty of the christian world to send them the Gospel—the efforts made for this purpose in their commencement, progress, and growing success—the encouragements to increasing exertion—the accountability of individuals in reference to this work—and the motives to action, as drawn from the love of God, the example of Christ, the nearness of death, the coming judgment, and the retributions of eternity. On these high considerations the churches must dwell, with intense, and never-ceasing interest. They must not regard them, as matters to be thought of at intervals, and on special occasions, but receive them as entering largely into the matter of their daily and hourly reflexions. They must meditate upon them in the watches of the night, as well as in business of the day; and they must pray over them in the closet, and at the family altar, as well as in the public congregation. The effect of this intimate and constant communion with these views will be, to strengthen the impression they are adapted to produce; or, in other words, to increase that faith which terminates upon them, and to make it work with more activity and strength in the performance of every duty which they seem to prescribe.

And, in bringing about this intimate and constant intercourse between the minds of Christians and those views of truth which relate to the conversion of the world, let me say, that much will ever depend upon the attention, the wisdom, and the faithfulness of *the ministry*. They are, to a great extent, the channel

of communication between the people and the fountains of knowledge. On them it depends largely, what the mental food of the people shall be. If the missionary cause is seldom adverted to in their preaching and prayers, it will occupy a low place in the remembrance and regards of those who sit under their ministrations. But, on the other hand, if they advert to it frequently, and with evident interest—if their hearts are so burdened with a sense of its importance, that they cannot but speak, and speak with earnestness on all befitting occasions—it will be surely magnified in the estimation of their hearers; it will arrest their attention, and press with power upon their hearts; it will have a constant place in their thoughts; and their faith in its magnitude and interest, will prompt them to increasing industry and liberality in their endeavours to promote it. Let the ministry see to it, then, that the churches are well instructed in all that relates to this undertaking. Let them make it an important part of their vocation, to collect and diffuse light in regard to the duty and progress of the missionary work. And then, it may be hoped, the faith of the people will be increased, and their exertions greatly enlarged.

2. Again: it is important, as tending to an increase of faith, that *every member of the church should give to the cause of Missions a PORTION OF HIS WORLDLY SUBSTANCE*. For, it is not to be doubted, that the exercise of the benevolent principle, in this way, is a means of grace to those who give, as well as of blessing to those who receive. There is a reflex operation here, by which “he that watereth shall be watered also himself.” And hence the unspeakable importance of such a system of contribution to the cause of missions, as shall bring the application directly and statedly to the door and heart of every individual. Setting aside the contribution itself, there is an advantage here, in the way of an increase of faith and feeling, which we cannot afford to lose. Our nature is such, that to give to an object increases our interest in it; it occupies, on this account, a larger share

of our attention ; it advances to a higher place in our affections ; and, we are ready to pray for its success with increasing frequency and fervour. For this reason, every member of the visible Church, from the highest to the lowest, and from the richest to the poorest, should be taught, and trained up *to give*. Even if thrown upon the charity of their more opulent brethren for the means of subsistence, it is better that they should give something, than withhold entirely. All that comes into the treasury of the Lord, in this way, brings with it an increase of the feeling and prayer of faith ; and, thereby, operates in two ways in promoting the object in view. It swells the amount of pecuniary means ; and, at the same time, inclines those who contribute, *to do more* in the way of prayer and personal effort, than they otherwise would.

3. And to this, I shall only add, that the Church may be expected to increase in faith, only *as she abounds in PRAYER for this blessing in particular*. God is the ultimate and efficient source, from which the blessing must come ; and prayer is the appointed method of reaching him, and procuring the influence which he is able and willing to bestow. As dissociated from this, no other means can be expected to produce the desired result. And, as there is no difference of opinion here, let the Church be one in feeling and practice, as she is one in faith. Let her ministry and members pray unitedly, fervently and perseveringly, for the pouring out of the Spirit upon themselves, that their faith may be strengthened—that their love may be increased—that their charity abound—and that the word of God, as sounding out through them, may soon fall upon every human ear among all the tribes and families of the earth. Let them do this in their secret and family devotions, as well as in their social and public assemblies, and the effect will soon be seen in showers of blessings upon themselves, and in the more rapid advancement of the cause which they profess to love.

In the spirit of these considerations, then,

fathers and brethren in the Christian ministry, and members of the Church of God, let us gird up the loins of our minds, and consecrate ourselves afresh to the service of God, in the great work of evangelising the world. This is, indeed, the work of all works, involving interest and results, which appertain to no other, to which our hearts or our hands can be devoted. It is a work which God claims as peculiarly his own ; and yet, in one important sense, he has made it *our work*, and has committed it to us, to be carried on to its consummation. It is the only work in which we can labour, in the hope of receiving an enduring reward. The gains of all other departments of industry are unsubstantial and perishing ; they consist of materials, which are to abide only for a season—they are “uncertain riches,” which make themselves wings, and “fly away”—in any event, our separation from them at death, will be final and everlasting. But in the work of the world's conversion, as far as we bring forth fruit, our fruit will remain. The wages of this labour are the approbation of God, and the rescued souls of the Heathen. And this is wealth that will never perish. Time will not destroy it—theives will not break through and steal it—the fires of the final day will not consume it. The heavens may pass away with a great noise ; the elements may melt with fervent heat ; and the earth and all things that are therein, may be burnt up—but God, and the souls of redeemed and glorified men, will still live. And, if we have done the work of faithful servants to him, and been instrumental in their salvation, we shall have reason to rejoice on this behalf, as long as eternity endures. Wherefore, instead of growing weary in this department of well doing, let us forget the things which are behind, and reach forth to those which are before. “There remaineth yet very much land to be possessed.” The field is wide, and white unto the harvest. The call for more labour is loud and pressing. Let us be up and doing ; for, “in due season, we shall reap if we faint not.”