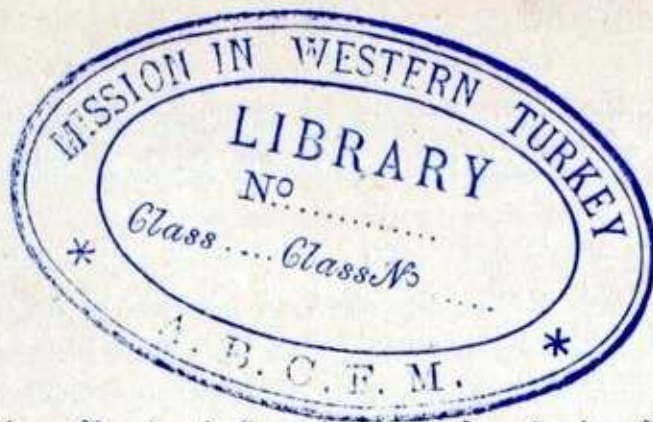


No 8



American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions.

THE NATIVE PASTORATE

AN ESSENTIAL MEANS OF PROCURING A NATIVE MINISTRY.

THE following was read by Dr. Anderson, one of the Secretaries of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, as a Special Report in behalf of the Prudential Committee, at the Annual Meeting of the Board in Springfield, Mass., in October, 1862. The subject is believed to be one of very great practical importance; and the discussion is commended to the prayerful consideration of the missionaries and patrons of the Board.

THE subject of committing churches gathered in the unevangelized world to the care of native pastors, thus leaving the missionaries more free for labors in "regions beyond," is engaging the attention of the Board and its patrons, more and more, as time advances. And as the number of such pastors is well known to be yet small, it is believed that the theme, in one of its more important aspects, might be properly and usefully here discussed, in a Special Report; though, as will appear, there is no call for any authoritative action upon it on the part of the Board.

Only thirty of the one hundred and seventy churches connected with the missions of this Board have native pastors. There are, as yet, none in our African, Syria and China missions. The Ceylon, Mahratta and Sandwich Islands missions have each four. The Madura mission has six; and there are eleven in the three missions to the Armenians of Turkey. The first impression is one of consid-

erable surprise, that there should be so small a number of native pastors in our twenty missions, after the lapse of thirty, forty, fifty years.

It is quite obvious, however, that this small number of native pastors does not result from any want of success in gathering native churches. Nor is it, in most cases, for the want of pious, educated natives in the employ of the missions; seeing we have four hundred of these, most of them virtually preachers, and very many of them actually licensed as such. Nor is it owing to any lack of attention on the part of the Prudential Committee and the Secretaries; for they took the ground, as many as twelve years ago, in a Special Report to the Board, that missionaries are and ought to be *evangelists*, and not pastors; and ever since, they have lost no opportunity to press upon their missionary brethren the great importance of the pastorate, as a means of securing a native ministry. Nor are the missionaries justly liable to censure in this matter; for they feel and confess, not less than ourselves, the desirableness of having the native churches so organized as to insure their earliest self-government and self-support.

It is fair to conclude, therefore, that the obstacles in the way of success in this direction, whatever they were, have been unavoidable, and such as would require some time to surmount. And so it has been. They have existed, (1.) In our inexperience; (2.) In the want of precedents to guide us; (3.) In ideas and habits the missionaries necessarily took with them from their native land; (4.) In the really unavoidable fact, that we began educating our native ministry prior to any proper development of native churches, and of course before we could know exactly what we wanted; (5.) In certain unavoidable errors in our higher education, shared by the Prudential Committee equally with the missionaries, whereby our candidates for the ministry became too strongly exposed to the temptations of higher wages in the business of the world; (6.) In the absence, resulting from the causes just mentioned, of a well-defined and settled purpose among the missionaries, to assign the native churches to the pastoral care of a native ministry; and (7.) In the consequent fact, that the native preachers were not educated, until within a few years, avowedly for the pastoral office, and therefore were not in expectation of it; and so the idea of it had not that place in their thoughts, nor that hold upon their consciences and hearts, which it has with a very large number of the pious young men in the colleges and higher schools of our own country.

There is still another view. Modern missions are wisely prosecuted, for the most part, by *married* men. The Christian family is an excellent and powerful leaven in heathen society; but it has also

its peculiar temptations and liabilities. The married missionary naturally builds him a house, in some convenient part of his field, and there makes his home, which becomes an attractive centre for a long while; and before he is aware, he has himself come more or less under the control of pastoral and parochial ideas and habits. We are happy to know that this tendency has been successfully resisted by many of our brethren. Still it is a fact, that two-thirds of our churches are *station-churches*, and that few of these have yet any other pastors than the missionaries.

The effect of this course, if too long persisted in, would be to insure perpetual pupillage and dependence to the native churches; and it has of late attracted the especial attention of at least a part of the missions. Nor can there be a doubt among careful readers of missionary intelligence, that these missions are intent on bringing about a salutary change, as fast as it seems to them possible. But this is not now an easy task. There has been so much lack of development in the native preachers, especially on the side of judgment and decision,—owing, in part, it may be, to their not having had more responsibility thrown upon them,—as to render it difficult for those who have known them long to feel it safe to commit the pastoral care to them; even though it be exercised for a time, under missionary supervision. Nor is the difficulty alone with the missionary. The native preacher, having his eye upon a better and surer maintenance, often prefers remaining in the service of the mission, and receiving his salary from it, to incurring the risk of a smaller and ill-paid salary as the pastor of a native church. And a more frequent and painful result is, that the tie holding native preachers to the gospel ministry, often proves too feeble to prevent their being drawn away by the allurements of the surrounding world.

Now the object of this paper is to show, that *well-defined prospects* and *well-understood expectations* of obtaining a pastorate in the native churches, are an essential element in the moral and religious forces by means of which these worldly inducements are to be resisted and overcome.

How is it in our own country? The cases are, perhaps, not perfectly analogous, but light will be thrown upon the subject if we consider how necessary to the obtaining of such a ministry here, is the prospect and expectation of obtaining eligible settlements as pastors. Every college student knows perfectly well, that the gospel ministry is not the road to affluence and ease. What then is the overcoming motive, inducing him to choose the ministry? What but the appeal which it makes to the conscience and to the highest and best religious

feelings? Not the commandment of our blessed Lord alone, to preach his gospel; but also the fact, that there are and will be churches and parishes needing and desiring their services as pastors and preachers, and that they feel especially called of God to devote themselves to these services. Experience shows, that the inward call of the Holy Spirit to this work needs the co-operating influence of well-defined providential openings to engage in it. There must be a distinct prospect of *local churches*,—of the *pastoral office*,—of a *waiting people*. Thus it is that we obtain our gospel ministry here at home. Could we suppose that no pastorates were in prospect, or that the most important of them would be filled by foreign preachers, our educated young men would then do just as too many of our more highly educated native converts have long been doing.

It should be remembered, that the laws governing the human mind are everywhere the same. The fixed relation between 'demand and supply' can no more be safely disregarded with the graduates of Batticotta, Pasumalie, Lahainaluna, Abeih, Bebek and Seir, than it can be with the graduates of our American colleges. Steam, telegrams, commerce,—wages, salaries, honors,—are everywhere; operating there as here; and are to be overcome in the same general manner. The pastoral office is of divine appointment, and sustains a very peculiar relation to the sanctified nature of man. Who has not seen this, and felt it? Hundreds of our best ministers spend their lives cheerfully, as pastors, on salaries they would by no means be contented to receive in mere worldly pursuits. When the pastorate is understood,—(and the same is even more true of the foreign missionary work,)—it has a peculiar sanctity, seeming nearer to the person and work of the Redeemer than any other office or work,—higher, better in the best sense, and far more influential than that of 'readers,' 'catechists,' or mere 'licentiates.' Nothing equals it. It is a great power in the church at home, and it may be made such in our foreign missions. It will require untiring effort on the part of the missions, to select the proper men; to instruct them with reference to the pastoral office; to impress them with its claims; to induce to a cheerful self-consecration; and to train them for its duties. The experience of the missions with native pastors, thus far, has been favorable on the whole. Yet doubtless it is true, that 'heady' and 'high-minded' persons will be more troublesome as pastors, than they would be in subordinate stations; and the multiplication of native pastorates will, for obvious reasons, add not a little to the cares and perplexities of missionary life. As among the Galatians, they will sometimes become 'bewitched,' and then will more or less 'bewitch' their people. We have already had some experience of this. But there is no shorter, no easier, no

better way to reach the great result at which we aim. Never, otherwise, shall we obtain a permanent, reliable, effective native ministry; and never succeed in establishing Christianity in any of the unevangelized nations.

But justice to the cause requires us to add, that the older missions under the care of this Board are not really so far from the important result we have been contemplating, as might seem at first sight. For, in most of the missions, there has already been great progress of opinion, in this direction. The missionaries more clearly perceive the *necessity* of the thing. They probably feel more confidence in the native character; but if not, they are more disposed to incur the risk; depending on Him, who instituted both the church and pastorate, and through whose grace alone it is that any of his servants are enabled to stand. Guided by experience, they have modified, or are modifying, the training schools for the native ministry, shaping their instruction more exclusively and exactly to the wants of the native churches. When the right men shall have been provided, and all in the right way, and when it is fully settled and declared, that the native churches are all to become the appropriate charge of native pastors, at the earliest possible day, then how little, comparatively, will remain to be done! Already there are numerous churches in need of such pastors. One-third of the existing churches are at *out-stations*, where missionaries do not reside, and not half of these are yet supplied. About one hundred are at the *stations*; and though native pastors have yet been given to but few of these, they have been to some, and the practice is extending; and the unordained native preachers have each more or less actual connection with some one of the churches; not unfrequently they are even a sort of *quasi*-pastors, only not clothed with the right of administering the ordinances.

All that we have said in this paper, has been under the strong conviction that this is a matter which must be left to the discretion of the several missions. Of course we may discuss it, and may use great freedom in our suggestions. But this is really all that we can properly do. With the missionaries is vested the right, by Christ in his Word, conveyed through the medium of Councils and Presbyteries, to institute this ministry; nor can the Board, nor indeed any other body of men in countries remote from the missions, do more than advise and exhort, so long as the missionaries do not transcend the plain line of their duty. Only the men on the ground can have full knowledge of the exigencies and difficulties of the case; and should the missionaries sometimes seem, to the more ardent of us, to be too cautious

and backward in pressing the native forces to the front of the battle, there is still no wiser course for us than to leave them in possession of the field, secure of our unabated confidence and support.

But should any have been so unfortunate in their experience of native character, as to be skeptical in respect to the possible reliability and efficiency of a native pastorate through the grace of God, we may properly raise a question as to the validity of their testimony. Besides a strong presumption against it, there are remarkable facts to the contrary; and the most remarkable of these, as stated by Dr. Tidman, Secretary of the London Missionary Society, at the Liverpool Missionary Conference, should be known and duly considered throughout the Christian world. Until the English missionaries at *Tahiti* had been driven away by the French, more than a score of years since, not a native pastor had ever been ordained. But when the native churches found themselves alone, they chose pastors from among themselves. "And," says the Secretary, "after twenty years of French misrule, notwithstanding all the influences of Popery on the one hand and of brandy and vice on the other, there are now living, under the instruction and influence of these native pastors, a greater number of church-members than ever they had aforetime." "With regard to *Madagascar*," adds the same witness, "twenty years ago or more, the European shepherds were sent away, and a few poor, timid lambs left in the midst of wolves. And what has been the result? Why, men have been raised up of God to take the oversight; and instead of tens of Christians, under the care of European pastors, there are now hundreds, nay thousands, under the teaching of these men!"

The foregoing was referred to a committee, consisting of Dr. Hawes, Dr. Shepard, Dr. W. Child, Rev. Albert Barnes, Dr. E. Davis, Rev. H. M. Dexter, and Rev. E. D. Morris, who subsequently presented the following report, which was accepted.

The committee to whom was referred the Special Report of the Prudential Committee relating to a Native Pastorate as an essential means of procuring a Native Ministry, report:

The object of this paper is evidently one of great importance. It is to urge the necessity and indicate the method of raising up native pastors to take charge of native churches, gathered among the unevangelized and heathen, as fast and as far as it can be done with any

good hope of success. There are obviously many difficulties in the way of accomplishing this object, and the time and manner of surmounting them must, to a great extent, be left to the judgment of the missionaries occupied in different fields of labor. It is well, however, to have the subject brought distinctly before them, and urged on their attention, as deserving their serious practical consideration. There can be no hope of planting the gospel permanently in any unevangelized or heathen land, but in connection with native pastors, raised up to preside over churches gathered in such localities. To supply such churches with pastors from this or any other Christian land, for any length of time, is obviously out of the question. To meet the exigency of the case, it is necessary that young men on the ground should be educated and trained with special reference to their being employed in the pastoral office, when they shall become suitably qualified for it. This design of their training should be kept distinctly before their minds, in the whole process of their education, that they may thus understand the nature and design of the sacred office, and enter upon it with a proper sense of the duties and responsibilities involved in it. And further, the churches should, as soon as practicable, be made to understand that they are to rely on native pastors for a permanent ministry, and are to furnish the means, as far as they are able, of supporting them. In a word, they should, from the first, be taught to be self-reliant; responsible for sustaining among themselves the institutions and ordinances of the gospel. To present and to urge these objects upon the attention of the Board, and its patrons and missionaries, is the design of the Special Report referred to our consideration. It has the cordial approval of your committee, and they recommend its adoption and publication.

