

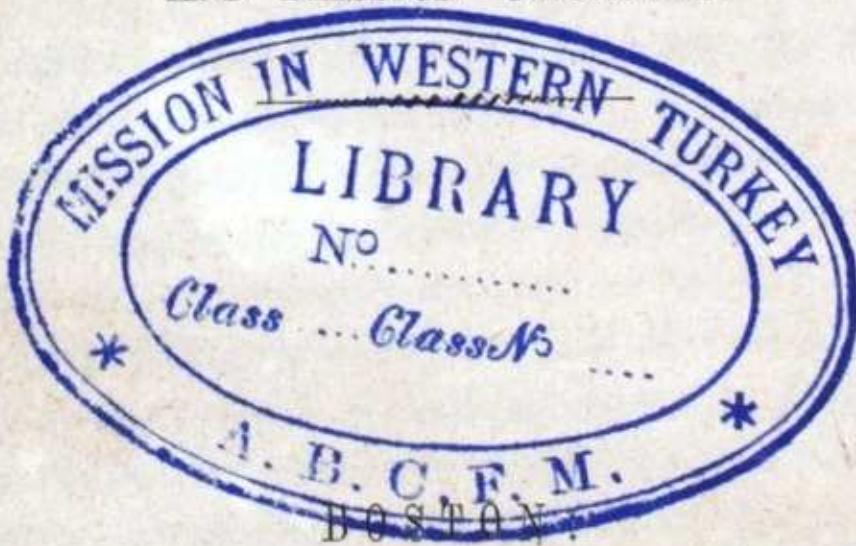
No. 15

AMERICAN BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS FOR FOREIGN MISSIONS.

MISSIONARY TRACTS.

NO. 2.

CONTROL TO BE EXERCISED OVER MISSIONARIES
AND MISSION CHURCHES.



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MISSIONARY TRACT, NO. 2.

CONTROL TO BE EXERCISED OVER MISSION-
ARIES AND MISSION CHURCHES.

At the meeting of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions in the year 1847, the following Resolution was adopted; viz.—“That the Prudential Committee be requested to present a written Report, at the next annual meeting, on the nature and extent of the control which is to be exercised over the missionaries under the care of the Board; and the moral responsibility of the Board for the nature of the teaching of the missionaries, and for the character of the churches.”

It will be seen, that this call upon the Prudential Committee involves a discussion of the whole working of the system of Foreign Missions. We ^{Nature of the discussion.} must determine the ecclesiastical standing and liberty of missionaries, and of the churches they gather among the heathen; inquire whether ecclesiastical liberty be not as safe for missionaries abroad, as for pastors at home, and whether missionaries and pastors are not in fact controlled by similar means and influences; show in what manner missionaries are obtained, what are the nature and force of their voluntary engagements, what are the powers and responsibilities of the Board, and what

is the actual extent of the claims of missionaries upon the Board and upon the churches. This will exhibit the working of the principle of voluntary association in missions, operating in perfect harmony with ecclesiastical bodies, and involving, as the main reliance, influences that bear directly on the reason, judgment and heart, and a brief mention must be made of the more important of these influences. The Prudential Committee will also be expected to show the adaptation of the constitution of the Board to its various trusts and duties. In respect to the native mission churches, the inquiry will arise, how far they ought to be independent of the jurisdiction of all bodies of men in this country; how they are to be trained to self-support and self-government; what expectations it is reasonable to cherish concerning them; and what are the responsibilities of the Board for the teaching of the missionaries, and for the character of the mission churches.

I.

THE MISSIONARIES.

1. THE ECCLESIASTICAL LIBERTY BELONGING TO MISSIONARIES.

The Board affirmed at Brooklyn, in the year 1845, that "the missionaries acting under the commission of Christ, and with the instructions of the New Testament before them, are themselves at first, and subsequently in connection with the churches they have gathered, the rightful and exclusive judges of what constitutes adequate evidence of piety and fitness for church-fellowship in professed converts."

It was doubtless intended, by this declaration, to recognize the missionaries under the care of the Board as entitled to equal liberty, in all ecclesiastical matters, with ministers at home.

Principle already recognized by the Board.

Ecclesiastical Liberty belonging to Missionaries.

They certainly are equally the ministers, messengers, and ambassadors of Christ; they equally receive from him their call, commission, office and work. *As a body*, they sustain to the churches at home a relation equally as close as do the *body* of the pastors. The several Christian denominations acting through the Board have, in all practicable ways, given to the missionaries it has sent forth their countenance, sanction, and adoption. "These missionaries," says a standard work on the Constitution of the Congregational Churches, "may justly be considered as sent abroad by the churches, inasmuch as they are supported by their contributions, attended by their prayers, and protected by their constant solicitude. It is true that the immediate agents, in designing and arranging their departure, are Missionary Societies; but these Societies, when the subject is rightly considered, are only the agents and representatives of the churches."* It should be added, that the missionaries are ordained to their office, as really as pastors, and by the direct representatives of the churches, and with the same formalities, and almost always with the knowledge that they are to be sent forth and directed by the Board. In this manner, the Board itself has been recognized by the churches and accredited as an Agent in the work of foreign missions; as it has been, also, by resolutions and other formal acts of General Associations, Synods, and General Assemblies, and by thousands of collections in aid of its funds made in the house of God on the Sabbath, and at other times and places, with the concurrence of pastors and churches.

Missionaries
adopted by the
Churches.

The Board recog-
nized as an Agent.

The denial that a missionary is an office-bearer until a Christian church has invited

Missionaries
Office-bearers.

* Upham's Ratio Disciplinae, p. 128.

him to take the oversight of it in the Lord, is made in utter forgetfulness, as it would seem, of the commission by which a preaching ministry was originally instituted. The primary and preëminent design of that commission was to create the *missionary* office, and to perpetuate it till the gospel should have been preached to every creature.

It is not claimed for missionaries that they are Apostles, since they have not the "signs of an Apostle," and since the apostolical office was not successive and communicable to others. That office was extraordinary, in the range both of its objects and its powers, and the Apostles can have no proper successors.

Missionaries are Evangelists. They do the work of Evangelists, and such they are—as Timothy and Titus were in the primitive missions, and as Eusebius says many were in the second century. "These," says that historian, "having merely laid the foundations of the faith, and ordained other pastors, committed to them the cultivation of the churches newly planted; while they themselves, supported by the grace and co-operation of God, proceeded to other countries and nations." The method of conducting missions has indeed been considerably modified by the altered condition of the world; rendering it possible to send forth a far greater number of missionaries than in ancient times, and to augment their value as instruments and to accelerate what may be called national conversions, by sending missionaries forth in the family state, and making their labor less itinerant and transitory than in early times; but the true relation of missionaries to the churches at home, and to the heathen world, appears to be that of Evangelists.

Considering the weakness and waywardness so generally found in men just emerging from heathenism, native pastors must, for a time, and in certain respects, be practically subordinate to the

Native Pastors of mission churches.

missionaries, by whom their churches were formed, and through whom, it may be, they are themselves partially supported. This is true, also, of the mission churches—as will be explained in another part of this Report. Should a practical parity, in all respects, be insisted on between the missionaries and the native pastors, in the early periods when every thing is in a forming state, it is not seen how the native ministry can be trained to system and order, and enabled to stand alone, or even to stand at all. As with ungoverned children, self-sufficiency, impatience of restraint, jealousy, and other hurtful passions will be developed. The native pastors themselves are, for a season, but ‘babes in Christ,’ children in experience, knowledge and character. And hence missionaries, who entertain the idea that ordination must have the effect to place the native pastors at once on a perfect equality with themselves, are often backward in intrusting the responsibilities of the pastoral office to natives. They fear, and justly, the effects of this sudden comparative exaltation; especially when aggravated by ordination formalities multiplied and magnified beyond the scriptural precedents;—involving a convocation of ministers and people, an ordination sermon, a formal charge, perhaps a right-hand of fellowship, and possibly an address setting forth the importance of the occasion,—in place of the simple laying on of hands and prayer, as in the apostolical ordinations. All this may be well in old Christian communities; but whatever advantages it is supposed to have among the heathen, these are thought to be overbalanced by its tendency to inflame the self-conceit and ambition remaining in the heart of the heathen convert, however carefully he may have been educated in the doctrines and duties of Christianity. We scarcely need any great amount of experience, indeed, when our thoughts are once turned to the subject,

to see that there is wisdom in the apostolical view of the pastoral office in mission churches, and in their mode of bringing forward a native ministry and training it for independent action.

It must be obvious, that the view just taken of this subject involves no danger to the future parity of the native ministry, considered in their relations to each other; for, in the nature of things, the missionary office is scarcely more successive and communicable to the native pastors, than was the apostolical office to evangelists.

The point specially insisted on is this,—that ministers of the gospel lose none of their ecclesiastical standing and liberty by engaging in the work of foreign missions.

The Missionary Office. No plea for abridging their ecclesiastical liberties can be founded on the fact of their support coming from the churches at home; because the obligation of the churches to support missionaries, rests on precisely the same basis with the obligation of missionaries to become such. Both the service and the support are to be rendered as a duty owed to Christ. The one is no more voluntary, no more optional, no more a work of supererogation, than the other. Missionaries are no more objects of charity, or beneficiaries, than are pastors at home. Their labors as truly entitle them to a support from some quarter. When the reality of the missionary's call from the Head of the church to go on a mission has been settled by competent and acknowledged testimony, an obligation arises and exists *somewhere*, to send him forth and support him. And after he has gone into the field, he can no more properly be *starved* out of his appropriate liberty by those to whom he looks for support, than he can be *legislated* out of it by those who direct his labors. Nor do missionaries become, in any servile sense, the servants of those who support them; they are not their hired-servants, but their fellow-servants. Christ is their common spirit-

ual Head, and he sends his missionaries forth a free ministry. And the Board seeks to accommodate itself to this principle in Christ's kingdom. "With great care, it seeks out competent men as missionaries and worthy of confidence; and then sends them out under the broad commission of the great Head of the church, to preach the gospel to every creature—themselves free, to propagate a free Christianity in the field of their labors. With a scrupulous regard for the rights of the missionaries in this particular, it places them among the perishing heathen, to gather as many as possible into the fold of Christ, and there leaves them, in the free and untrammelled exercise of their own judgment under a due sense of accountability to Christ, to decide on the spot, in each particular case as it occurs, what is sufficient evidence of genuine conversion, and what is the proper and sufficient ground for the admission of the heathen convert to the privileges of the Christian Church."*

When the Committee come to treat of the checks and influences, under which missionaries operate, it will be seen that this degree of liberty is compatible with as perfect a responsibility, as is attainable in the present state of human nature and of the world. But it is important to remark here, that this responsibility can never be perfectly enforced except by guarding the religious liberties of missionaries with the most scrupulous care. Men must be free, and must feel that they are free, in order to rise to the full capacity and dignity of moral agents, and be subjected to the full control of law, reason, and the moral sense. And, of all gospel ministers, the missionary among the heathen most needs to have his mind and spirit erect, and to feel that all good men are his brethren. This is necessary to the

*Liberty essential
to Responsibility.*

* Prof. William Smyth, of Bowdoin College.

unity, peace, order and efficiency of every mission. The law of liberty is an all-pervading law in Christ's kingdom.

2. HOW THE RESPONSIBILITY OF MISSIONARIES IS SECURED.

So far as the Committee can rely on the experience of nearly forty years, they regard it as not less safe to concede ecclesiastical liberty to missionaries, than to pastors. And how eminently safe it has been at home, the last two centuries can testify. In each of the denominations of Christians represented in this Board, the understanding, conscience, and heart of ministers are supposed to operate with equal freedom in the performance of their spiritual duties; and it is the prevalent belief, in each of these denominations, that this liberty could not be advantageously diminished.

What the Prudential Committee are to show is this:—

Missionaries to be controlled as Pastors are.

That foreign missionaries are subjected to similar controlling influences with pastors at home. These influences are exerted in the selection of missionaries; in their voluntary engagements; in the terms of their pecuniary support; in their mutual watchfulness over each other; and in the direct influence of truth upon their minds and hearts.

1. Missionaries are, in an important sense, selected for the work, and it thus comes to pass that they have, as a body, a trust-worthy character.

The Board does not, indeed, extend a "call" to them, as churches do to those whom they would have for their pastors. This has sometimes been recommended, as preferable to the course now pursued. But few missionaries would be obtained in this way. The missionary spirit has not yet strong hold enough upon the churches, or

upon the colleges and theological seminaries, for the adoption of such a plan. Were the responsibility to be thus taken from students and candidates for the ministry, and assumed by missionary institutions, the young men in our theological schools would seldom be found in a state of mind or in circumstances to give an affirmative answer to a "call," by the time their characters and qualifications should have been sufficiently developed to warrant one. It is found to be better to lay the case before all, and leave the result to the providence and grace of God. Consecration to the foreign missionary work for life, involves a somewhat peculiar experience of its own; and the earlier and more thoroughly that experience is wrought in the soul, the better is the prospect of continuance and usefulness in the work of missions.

The Committee have been accustomed, generally, to wait for written *offers* from the candidates to go as missionaries under the direction of the Board. These are usually made some time before the theological course of studies is completed, and are commonly preceded by personal conferences or an informal correspondence with the Secretaries. The offer is accompanied by testimonials from pastors, instructors in colleges and seminaries, and others. If the testimony be decisive and satisfactory, the individual is invited to visit the Missionary House in Boston. This arrangement is found useful and satisfactory to all parties. There is now, if there has not been before, a free conference with him as to his religious principles and experience, his social relations, his motives in choosing the missionary work, his adaptations and preferences with respect to a field of labor, and whatever else is important in determining the question of his appointment and designation. Should it now appear to be the candidate's duty not to engage in a foreign mission, it is generally easy to convince him of the fact, and his

case does not proceed to any formal action on the part of the Committee. Where the duty to go is clear, an appointment follows. The candidate next seeks ordination, at his discretion, from some ecclesiastical body; which body subjects him to as thorough an examination, as if he were to settle as a pastor. He is not taken on trust from the Board, but his call to the missionary work is brought under a renewed investigation.

It is believed that the missionaries laboring in connection with this Board are equal, as to ministerial qualifications and character, to the body of pastors in either denomination represented in the Board, in any one of the States of the Union; and this fact is evidently one of great importance, in an inquiry as to the possibility of exerting a reasonable control over their proceedings.

Their Engage-
ments.

2. Missionaries come voluntarily under similar engagements with pastors at home.

The pastor's engagements are made to his church and people, to the body that ordains him, and, through that body, to the churches; in addition to his solemn and well-understood vows to his Lord and Master. The missionary's engagements are to the Board, acting in the way of a general superintendence over his proceedings as a missionary, and to the ordaining body, and, through those bodies, to the community from which he is to derive his support; and he also makes explicit vows to his Divine Master.

The missionary engages, on accepting his appointment, to conform to the rules and regulations of the Board, the nature of which he is supposed distinctly to understand. He thus pledges himself, among other things, to be governed by the majority of votes in his mission, in regard to all questions that arise in their proceedings; the proceedings being subject to the revision of the Prudential Committee. He comes, moreover, under certain

other distinct and well-understood pledges :—(1.) As to his *manner of life*; which is to be one of exemplary piety and devotion to his work. (2.) As to his *teaching*; which must be conformed to the evangelical doctrines generally received by the churches, and set forth in their well-known Confessions of Faith. And (3.) As to *ecclesiastical usages*; to which he must conform substantially as they prevail among the churches operating through the Board. He must hold to a parity among the clerical brethren of his mission. He must hold to the validity of infant baptism. He must admit only such to the Lord's Supper, as give credible evidence of faith in Christ.

3. The missionary's claim for continued support, like that of the pastor, depends upon his fulfilling his engagements. They must be faithful.

Unless faithful to these engagements, the missionary cannot claim a continuance of his support. And the Board not only may, but it must insist on his performance of them. It is bound to know, that the missionary preaches the gospel and administers the ordinances according to his expressed and implied pledges; which of course he must do, or retire from his connection.

The responsibilities and powers of the Board, in this aspect of the case, are easily defined. While it cannot depose a missionary from the ministry, nor silence him as a preacher, nor cut him off from the church, it can dissolve what it formed, namely, his connection with itself and with the mission. While the Board may not establish new principles in matters purely ecclesiastical, it may enforce the observance of such as are generally acknowledged by the churches, and were understood to be acknowledged by the missionaries when sent to their fields. While the Board may not require that baptism shall always be performed by sprink- Responsibilities and Powers of the Board. In respect to matters Ecclesiastical.

ling, nor forbid that the Lord's Supper shall be administered to converts after they have given what the missionaries believe to be credible and satisfactory evidence of piety; it may require, (for such are the established and acknowledged usages,) that he receive none into the church, except such as are believed to be truly pious persons; that he baptize in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; and that he do not refuse baptism to the infant children of the church.

Where the opinions of the great body of its patrons are divided in regard to the *facts* of Scripture, the Board may not undertake to decide, positively, as to the nature of those facts, with a view to binding the conduct of its missionaries. Such a fact, at present, is the admission of slave-holders into the apostolical churches. The

In respect to
Slavery. Board may not undertake to decide, that this class of persons was certainly admitted to church-membership by the Apostles, nor that they were excluded,—in such a way as to have the effect on the missionaries of a statute, injunction, or Scripture doctrine in respect to the admission of such persons into churches now to be gathered in heathen nations where slavery is found. The Board, the Prudential Committee, and the Secretaries may have their opinions on this subject, as well as on all others, and (as will be stated more fully hereafter) may freely express those opinions in their correspondence with the missionaries, and ought to do so, if they see occasion, with such reasonings, persuasions and remonstrances, as they may think proper. But they cannot properly go farther. Nor can the Board assume, as the basis of any of its proceedings, or imply in any manner, that the apostolical usages are not the wisest and best for all modern missionaries to follow, who are similarly situated with the Apostles. Nor can it do any thing in direct and manifest contrariety to

the great Protestant maxim, on which our own religious liberties depend, that *the Scriptures are the ONLY and the SUFFICIENT rule of faith and practice.*

On the other hand, if it was an usage of the Apostles to give definite and positive instructions to the holders of slaves as to their treatment of them—instructions which had a tendency to do away the institution—and if such instructions are found in their Epistles, then modern missionaries may be expected to conform to that usage, and to give the same instructions in like circumstances; though the time and manner of doing this must be referred, in great measure, to their own discretion, as with ministers at home, in respect to the direct inculcation of specific duties. The successful inculcation of such duties presupposes a certain amount of doctrinal knowledge in those who are to be operated upon, as well as of moral susceptibility, and also a due adaptation in the instructions to time, place, and circumstances.

But while the Board may require, that the missionaries under its care instruct all classes of men after the manner of the Apostles, it is not at liberty to restrict the missionaries to the identical instructions given by the Apostles; because there is no good reason to suppose, that all the instructions are recorded in the New Testament, which the Apostles were accustomed to give. Missionaries may go farther, if their convictions of duty require it, and may apply what they regard as the obvious and generally conceded principles of the gospel to the case. They have the same liberty, in their preaching, with ministers of the gospel elsewhere. They may instruct their converts, among other things, on the Christian duty of fully conceding the right of marriage to the slaves; of not holding them as property; of sacredly respecting the relation between husbands and wives, and between parents and children; and of securing to all the right of

worshiping God, and of reading his holy word. And the Committee have no hesitation in urging the duty of such instruction upon their brethren among the heathen; with the plain inculcation, in the prosecution of their ministry, of whatever obligation grows out of the fundamental law of love, as given by the Lord Jesus Christ, "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them;"—it being understood that the missionaries are to have the liberty of exercising their discretion as to time and manner.

Nor have the Committee any hesitancy in saying that, since the gospel was so preached by the Apostles as ultimately to root out the most extensive and terrible system of slavery the world has ever seen, so ought missionaries now, in times and ways within the range of their own discretion, so to hold up the doctrines, duties and spirit of the gospel, that it shall have the same beneficent tendency on the social condition of the heathen.

A writer of unquestioned opposition to slavery has justly remarked, that it would seem to be within the discretion of a missionary in a slave-holding community, whether he will attack slavery directly, and by name, or "whether he will strike at some one or more of the things which enter essentially into it, and the wrong of which can, in the actual circumstances of that community, be set home with convincing power upon the conscience of the slave-holder."*

Slavery is, indeed, at variance with the principles of the Christian religion, and must disappear in any community, in proportion as the gospel gains upon the understandings and the hearts of men. But the Board and its missionaries are restricted to moral means, and these

* Prof. Smyth.

must have time and opportunity to exert their appropriate influence. Missionaries should be employed who *deserve* confidence, and then confidence should be reposed in them; nor should results be required, which are beyond the power of their labors to produce. Many things which, at first, it might seem desirable for the Board to do, are found, on a nearer view, to lie entirely beyond its jurisdiction; so that to attempt them would be useless, nay, a ruinous usurpation. Nor is the Board at liberty to withdraw its confidence from missionaries, because of such differences of opinion among them, as are generally found and freely tolerated in presbyteries, councils, associations, and other bodies here at home.

Polygamy stands on a somewhat different footing from that of Slavery. Little difficulty is apprehended from it in gathering native churches. The evi- In respect to Polygamy. dence that polygamists were admitted into the church by the Apostles, is extensively and increasingly regarded as inconclusive, by the patrons of the Board. We no where find instructions given, in the New Testament, to persons holding this relation. Nor is there evidence of the practice having existed in any of the churches subsequent to the apostolical age. The Committee believe, that no positive action by the Board, in relation to this subject, is needed, or expedient. Unsustained as the practice is by any certain precedents in the apostolical churches, and unauthorized by a single inspired injunction, the native convert will rarely be able to prove the reality of his piety, should he persist in clinging to it, or refuse to provide for the education of his children, or for the support of their mothers, (when they need such provision,) if he may not be permitted to regard the mothers as his wives.

Should the missionary violate his compact in respect to the character or amount of his preaching and teach-

ing; or in respect to the administration of the ordinances of the gospel; or by refusing to conform to the resolutions of his mission, or of the Prudential Committee, or of the Board, or in any other manner; the Prudential Committee, on being certified of the fact, is in duty bound to consider and act on the bearing this ought to have on his relations to the Board, and his claim for a continued support.

This claim for support, so far as it applies to the Board, is understood to be only for an equitable proportion of the sum-total of funds actually placed at the disposal of the Board, for the expenses of the year. The Board can divide only what it receives. The missionary goes forth trusting in God that there will always be enough for his wants. He cheerfully incurs the risk, whatever it may be, and which past experience of God's goodness shows to be small. And he does this the more cheerfully, because his work is so eminently a work of faith. Mere pledges for his support from churches and ecclesiastical bodies, are too delusive to be depended on. It is only to a small extent that pledges can be obtained from individual Christians, and even the precise import and obligation of these are apt to be forgotten by those who give them. Nor are the formal pledges of support given to the Board worth any thing, except so far as they represent the deep-seated missionary principles and sentiments of the Christian community. There is, indeed, no firm footing for the missionary, except in the promises of his Lord and Master. Faith in Christ is the basis of his enterprise. It is so in respect to himself, his children, his work, and the desired results of all his sacrifices and labors,—preëminently so, compared with that of the pastor at home. And herein lies the special dignity of his calling.

The missionary goes on his mission in the discharge

of his own personal duty, because he believes his Lord and Savior requires him to go as his servant and ambassador. If he have a proper view of his mission, he would regard it as lowering the work immeasurably, to bring in the churches, or the Board, as *principals*; or as any thing else than mere *voluntary helpers*, selected and chosen by himself to carry out the benevolent purpose of his own independent self-consecration. The idea that there is any such contract between the churches or the Board and the missionary, that he may cease to perform missionary labor, and claim a pension, (as the servants of the East India Company do,) after a certain number of years, and while he is yet able to labor—should it ever become an effective element in the reasoning of missionaries—would prove destructive to the faith and vitality of the enterprise. If this idea has sometimes been advanced by missionaries, it has been when reasoning under the pressure of parental solicitude, and in great part on the assumption, that the work of publishing the gospel was committed by Christ to the church as a society, or corporate body, to act as a principal in the matter; and as such, in the discharge of its own preëminent duty, to send forth and support preachers in all the world; whereas the command was given to individual disciples, as such, and whatever use was made of social organizations during the apostolical age, the work was always regarded as the discharge of an individual and personal obligation. It is not less an individual and personal duty now, than it was then. The enlisting in the missionary enterprise is wholly voluntary, as well on the part of the missionary who goes abroad, as on the part of his fellow-christian who remains at home. They are co-workers and mutual helpers; and the coöperation of the donor is as essential to the prosecution of the work, as the labors of the missionary. On the part of all concerned, the consecration,

whether of person or property, is a voluntary offering by individual subjects of Christ's kingdom. Churches, in their organized capacity, have no authority to prescribe to any one of their members what he must do; but each must decide for himself, as the result of his own consciousness of duty and privilege, what he ought to do, and to what part of the work he should devote himself. It is a question of individual responsibility. "As we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another;" and whatever any one does, he is to feel that it is in the discharge of his own prescribed duty. Christians at home will feel that they are indebted to the missionary in the same sense that the missionary is indebted to them. They will no more feel, that the missionary is doing their work, by going on a mission, than that they are doing his, by giving to support him. Each has his own appropriate service, and each will regard himself as the servant of a common Master, engaged in a common work, and performing just that part of it, which the Master has assigned to him. This view of the subject is the only one that will comport with the successful prosecution of missions, for a prolonged period of time, and on an extended scale. It is necessary for all parties to feel, *that they are discharging only their own personal obligations, that they are performing only their own appropriate work.*

The system, as it has been described, is found to work easily and well. The missionary is as free, in every sense, as the pastor. One is no more really held accountable for the manner of expending his salary, than is the other. One can no more absent himself from his field of labor and his work, without the concurrence of the body that furnishes the means of his support, than the other. The pastor can no more

Working of the system.

travel at the expense of his people, whether for health or business, without their consent, than the missionary can do so at the expense of the Board, without the consent of the Committee, or, in certain specified cases, of his mission. The chief embarrassments experienced in the working of the system, are when the Committee are constrained to interpose their action in order to relieve a mission from the influence of one of its own members, and where the questions at issue relate to points in missionary practice and expediency, with which the community at home have not yet had opportunity to become fully conversant. In a case of immorality, if it be flagrant, the compact may be annulled. So if the missionary break fellowship with his brethren, and deny their baptism, or their ordination, his right to continue in the mission would cease ;—it being a well-ascertained fact, that such opinions, in addition to violating the understood engagements, usually prove destructive to the harmony of a mission, when embraced by any of its members. The same is true, if there be error in respect to important doctrines of the gospel. It is not so much the mere doctrinal errors that are considered by the Committee, as their distracting influence on the happiness and efficiency of the mission. The question assumes a plain business form,—whether there is an actual departure from the basis on which the missionary appointment was made, and what effect it is exerting on the peace and usefulness of the mission, and on the operations of the Board.

That the action of the Prudential Committee, dissolving the connection of a missionary with his mission and the Board, is not of the nature of an *ecclesiastical* proceeding, technically speaking, is evident from the fact, that it leaves his ecclesiastical relations undisturbed. His regular standing, both as a

Action of the Board
not Ecclesiastical.

minister of the gospel and a member of the church, is not directly affected. As his appointment by the Board did not destroy his relations to his association or presbytery, so neither does his dismissal. The Committee of course leave the ecclesiastical relations of the case for the ecclesiastical body, (if it choose to consider them,) with which the missionary may happen, at the time, to be connected.

It will often be found, where difficulties between a returned missionary and the Committee come out to the view of the community, that the original difficulty was not between the missionary and the Committee, but between the missionary and his brethren of the mission; and that the Committee interfered and assumed responsibility in the matter only when it became necessary, in order to relieve the mission from distracting and paralyzing divisions. The Board has had as few unpleasant relations to its missionaries, it is believed, in proportion to the number of persons, as any other missionary society in the new or old world.

It should be stated, that the missionary has his safeguards, as well as the pastor. The latter is not dismissed from his people without the intervention of a council or presbytery. Such a direct ecclesiastical intervention is manifestly impossible as the case stands between the missionary and his directors. But the Committee do not see that the case would be otherwise, were the Board elected by an ecclesiastical body, a General Assembly for instance. If the question between him and the Board relate merely to Christian doctrine, or to alledged immoralities, and has sufficient importance to awaken the interest of an ecclesiastical body, he can obtain an opinion on his proper Christian or ministerial standing from his presbytery, or classis, or from a council, and have the benefit of such a result.

With this right the Committee have never attempted to interfere.

Enough has been said to show, that whatever of salutary influence there is in the connection between a pastor's faithful performance of his engagements and the continuance of his support from his people, there is no less with the missionary.

But the grand reliance for the proper conduct of missionaries, is

4. On their mutual watchfulness over each other, and the direct influence of truth on their minds and hearts.

As soon as a mission contains three or more missionaries, it is expected to organize itself as a self-governing community, under the laws, regulations, and general superintendence of the Board. Mutual Watchfulness of Missionaries. Mutual watchfulness thus becomes the offi-

cial duty of each member. It is also in a high sense the interest of each one to exercise a fraternal watchfulness over his brethren, in order to the safety and success of the enterprise in which the common welfare and happiness are embarked. And as brethren in Christ, as members of his church, and as jointly and severally his ambassadors to the heathen,—by the force of each of these relations they are impelled to the same duty. Nor have the several missions under the care of the Board been a whit behind the ecclesiastical organizations of their native land in mutual and faithful watchfulness.

The influence of truth on the reason, judgment, and heart of missionaries, is mainly through the intercourse kept up with the Christian world, and especially with their native land, and through their reading and studies, and the reacting effect of the faithful discharge of their missionary duties.

The interest, which missionaries feel in their native land, is not diminished by distance. Their home for

Christ's sake, the home of their duty, is among the hea-
 then, and grace makes them more than wil-
 Influence from the Native Land. ling to live and die there. But nature has
 another home, dear to memory and ever interesting to
 thought and feeling, and with this they keep up an active
 correspondence during life. It is striking to observe the
 number of letters passing between missionaries and their
 friends. The effect of this correspondence must be great
 in cherishing the social feelings, and especially in preserv-
 ing the desire for a good name in their native land. This
 effect is increased by the reading of religious and other
 newspapers, and of magazines and books, that are con-
 tinually going to the missions, and causing the public
 opinion at home, on all subjects, to bear directly on mis-
 sionaries, as it does on pastors. The Committee have
 long deemed it wise to pursue a liberal policy with respect
 to these matters, since well-informed, active and growing
 minds yield most readily to wholesome rules and deci-
 sions, and to reason and common sense.

Correspondence. The correspondence of the executive offi-
 cers of the Board with particular missions,
 is more or less extended, at different times, according
 to circumstances. The free use of reasoning has always
 been awarded to them on all subjects, upon which they
 believe it would be useful to correspond with their breth-
 ren in the missions. No points are so much in dispute,
 but the Secretaries feel themselves at liberty to advert
 freely to them,—always being subject of course to have
 their correspondence revised at pleasure by the Commit-
 tee, or by the Board. They may write upon caste, po-
 lygamy, slavery, creeds, preaching, education, the use of
 the press, modes of worship, evidence of piety, the
 Christian life, and numberless other kindred subjects.
 And they may give all the weight they can to their argu-
 ments, by bringing the experience of other missions and

what they know of the state of the public mind at home to bear on the questions at issue. The religious newspapers and other periodicals furnish the means of performing this latter service in respect to all subjects that interest and excite the community. It is believed to be the duty of the Secretaries, acting under the direction of the Committee, to see that the missions are well furnished with the lights of truth. The Committee have had ample evidence of the value of this method of control. No class of ministers being more select than that which is engaged in the foreign missions, on none does correct reasoning, and especially that which is founded on the word of God, have more influence. In general, nothing more is needed, in the actual relations and responsibilities of missionaries, to control the opinions and operations of a mission, than good scriptural arguments. And in all cases affecting the conscience, the less there is of an appearance of authority, the better the result.

Libraries are connected with the several ^{Libraries, Studies, &c.} missions, some of which are very valuable; the *material* for labor and study, in all the departments, is abundantly supplied; and the missionary, in common with the pastor, has his peculiar inducements to study and to cultivate his mind and heart, growing out of the exigencies of his position. And the more devoted, laborious, and faithful he is in his work, the less need does he commonly stand in of influence and direction from without. Truth, conscience, a sense of duty, regard for unity and peace, deference to public opinion, and concern for God's glory and the good of mankind,—things such as these (not without some thought, it may be, of engagements to the Board and its patrons, and of the inconveniences resulting from their violation,) have rarely failed to be sufficient, with the divine blessing, to secure order and efficiency in the working of Christian

missions in foreign lands. In other words, it is the blessing of God on the free and vigorous working of the voluntary principle in missions, based on Christian piety and intelligence.

It will doubtless be found, on a careful examination of the history of modern Protestant missions, that no method of controlling missionaries differing substantially from the one here described, has ever been effectual. Missions from this country, especially, can in no other way be long kept in existence.

Should it be supposed, that the great distance of the missions from the community which supports them, must weaken the controlling influence, two things are to be considered:—(1.) The public attention is more generally and intently fixed on the conduct of the missionaries, than it is upon that of ministers any where at home. (2.) There is no greater probability that all the members of one of the larger missions will go wrong together, or will countenance one of their own number in so doing, than that there will be similar wrong-doing in almost any body of ministers, of equal numbers, which can be named in our own country. For they are as intelligent, as pious, have as much principle and sense of character, and as much desire to please God and do good; and they know that they are watched, by Christians over the world.

It is due to the patrons of the Board, who may entertain doubts whether its constitution is well adapted to secure the safest and most efficient prosecution of missions among the heathen, to advert briefly The Constitution of the Board. to the subject; indeed, the discussion would not otherwise be complete.

It is difficult to see how the Board would increase its working power, by any considerable changes in its constitution. So far, indeed, as the greater part of New

England is concerned, there does not seem to be a possibility of forming what is called an Ecclesiastical Board, unless the relations of the Congregational churches to each other are first essentially modified. By what bodies should the members of such a Board be appointed? And were such an institution to be created, it would no more possess authority to perform purely ecclesiastical acts, than has the present Board. It would at least not be wise to attempt a change in the present organization, until the details of the change are clearly proposed and understood, and well considered; nor until there is good reason to believe the new or modified organization would work better than the present;—that it will command more confidence at home among the churches, and more abroad with the missionaries, and also secure the confidence which the present Board has gained in the mercantile world. Our fathers were providentially led to adopt the existing form of organization for conducting foreign missions, as best adapted to their day; and when the existing form shall be found not to answer the purpose, their children will doubtless change it. It was instituted solely for the spread of the gospel among the heathen, and in times favorable for taking an unbiassed view of the subject; and hitherto it has actually worked better than any of its founders ventured to expect. It has, indeed, signally enjoyed the blessing of God. The attendance and interest at its annual meetings, the responses to its appeals for funds, the number and character of the men who go as its missionaries, the success of its missions, and the standing it is permitted to hold in the estimation of Christians generally,—place it on a footing with the most favored kindred institutions, whether voluntary or ecclesiastical. Nor does it appear to have less hold than other societies on the confidence, affection, and conduct of its missionaries, nor upon the community to which it

looks for support. Those who suppose that the leading motive with the community to contribute funds for the support of a system of missions, is in the manner in which a missionary society is appointed, or in the form of its constitution, fall into an error. It is rather in the number and importance of the missions ; in the tokens of God's presence in those missions ; in the evidence of judgment, faithfulness, and energy in the administration. The essential thing doubtless is, that the contributors have the means of obtaining satisfactory evidence that their money is well employed. This they have in respect to the Board. Its one hundred and eighty Corporate members, and its five or six thousand Honorary members, invariably secure for it an annual meeting, (continuing three days,) that forms a *representation* of the individuals and of the Christian community supporting its operations, as real, active, and extensive, as any other benevolent society has in this country, or in the world. There is at that meeting a representation from most parts of the community ; and the greater portion, if not the whole of those present, take an intelligent and lively interest in the enterprise. It would seem to be scarcely possible, in the present state of the churches, that the interests of a system of missions should be more perfectly represented, or be surrounded with more effectual safeguards.

The Honorary members have the same right with the Corporate members of calling up subjects for inquiry at the meetings, of proposing resolutions, of acting on committees, of declaring their opinions, and of exerting every kind of moral influence ; and there was never an important subject before the annual meeting for discussion, when the prevailing opinion of the whole meeting was not certainly known. The right of voting is indeed restricted by the Charter to members elected by ballot ; and the value of the Charter, in a financial point of view, forbids

its being unnecessarily relinquished, or set aside. These voting members are the trustees for the funds; and by accepting the trust, they come individually under special obligation with regard to the disposal of the funds, the preservation of the credit of the institution, and the general working of the system. They are specially bound to attend the annual meetings. Whatever theoretical importance (and it is not to be undervalued) is attached to an extension of the privilege of voting, it would not probably have altered a single result of any importance in the proceedings of the Board, from the beginning of its existence. And greatly must the religious state of our churches be changed for the worse, before there can be any real danger in the present organization.

The Board is to be viewed as an AGENCY, acting for such as choose to employ it. It does not profess to be, and it is not, a distinct power with separate interests from the churches; nor do its secretaries go into parishes as a substitute for the pastor, or as a co-ordinate power, to advocate a distinct and independent interest, in which the pastor and people have no concern; but, for the time being, they are mere auxiliaries to the pastors—the *agents of the pastors*—the pastors being the responsible persons. When the present organization is no longer deserving of confidence, it will soon die as a thing of course. So far as the Board is an active and influential body, it is a mere creature of the public mind. It must go along with the permanent majority. It has no authority. It cannot, except by an abuse of terms, be said to levy taxes. It taxes no one. It can only state the command of Christ, the necessities of the heathen, the facilities for doing the work of missions, its own plans and operations, and God's blessing upon them; and argue, exhort and plead. Men give or not, just as they please; and it is best that it should be so.

The corrective power, in respect to the undue multiplication and irregular working of voluntary associations, *lies with the pastors and churches*. It is for *them*, individually, to decide what objects shall and what shall not have access to their pulpits by means of agents. Here lies the only corrective power—where it ought to lie—in the primary associations and assemblies of the Christian church; and here there is such a power, easily applied, and, if applied, adequate to the emergency.

The corrective power in Voluntary Associations.

II.

THE MISSION CHURCHES.

I. THE LIBERTY BELONGING TO MISSION CHURCHES.

The Mission Churches in foreign lands connected with the missions under the care of the Board, do not come properly under the jurisdiction of any body of men in this country. This is of course true so far as the Board is concerned, since that is not a body having ecclesiastical authority; and it is believed to be equally true in respect to all ecclesiastical bodies. The influence exerted upon the mission churches by the ecclesiastical bodies of this country, should be through the missionaries. We can claim no jurisdiction over the mission churches because we planted them.

Mission Churches not under foreign jurisdiction.

The great object of foreign missions is to persuade men to be reconciled to God, as their rightful and only Sovereign; and the organization of churches is as really a means to this great end, as the preaching of the gospel, or the printing of the Holy Scriptures. When the time comes for organizing native converts into churches, the missionaries, acting in behalf of these children in knowledge and in the power of self-organization and

government, cannot properly be restrained, by foreign interference, from conforming the organization to what *they* regard as the apostolical usage in similar cases;—having respect, of course, to those necessary limitations already mentioned, to which they have voluntarily subjected themselves for the maintenance of their social existence as missions, and for securing a regular and competent support from the Christian community at home. (See pp. 10, 11.) The result may be a much simpler organization for the mission churches, than is found in lands that have long sat under the light and influences of the gospel. Indeed, experience has clearly shown, that it is not well to attempt the transfer of the religious denominations of Christendom, full-grown and with all their peculiarities, into heathen lands; at least, until the new-born churches shall have had time to acquire a good degree of discriminative and self-governing power. The experience acquired in lands long Christian, partially fails us when we go into heathen countries. We need to gain a new experience, and to revise many of our principles and usages, and for this purpose to go prayerfully to the New Testament.

The religious liberty which we ourselves enjoy, is equally the birthright of Christian converts in every part of the heathen world, on coming into the spiritual kingdom of Jesus Christ, which they may claim as soon as they are prepared for it;—just as American freedom is the birthright of our own children. It is a liberty based on the broad principles of the gospel. The right of our children is not infringed by that dependence and control which they need during their infancy and childhood. It is even their right to claim, that the parent *shall* thus act for them in the early stages of their existence. But the wise parent will always form the principles and habits of his child with reference to the time when the right of self-

control must be fully exercised and yielded. In like manner the missionary must needs give form, at the outset, to the constitution and habits of the mission churches; and for a time he must virtually govern them. But he will do this with a constant regard to the coming period, when those churches must and will act independently. He will train them, as the Apostles evidently trained the churches under their care, so that they may be early freed from the necessity of missionary supervision. In the infancy of that Christian community which is placed under his care, he will act on such scriptural principles and usages as he deems best fitted to make the most of every individual member of the church. And this he will do at any amount of personal inconvenience to himself; remembering that the power of carrying burdens is acquired by practice, and that native converts can be inured to responsibilities only by having responsibilities placed upon them, and by a conviction that they are trusted. At the risk of multiplying his most painful cares and disappointments, he will also aim to provide a native pastor for each church, just as early as he can in the period of his own missionary supervision, that the spiritual machinery may be homogeneous and complete in all its parts, and may the sooner be made to work without foreign aid. In no other way, indeed, can he secure the grand result for which he labors—the development of the self-sustaining, self-governing power in the native Christian community.

Nor may we expect or require of the mission churches, as the condition of giving them the gospel and its institutions, that they shall always think, judge, and act just as we do. We ought cheerfully to abide the consequences of the full assertion of our principles; and have patience, and bear long, and not give over, till it is evident that our moral means are exhausted, and that our enterprise has failed.

The necessity for long-suffering forbearance with churches gathered from among the heathen, will be the more obvious, if we consider three things.

Mission Churches necessarily imperfect.

One is thus stated in the Cambridge Platform.* “The weakest measure of faith is to be accepted in those that desire to be admitted into the church; because weak Christians, if sincere, have the substance of that faith, repentance and holiness, which is required in church members, and such have the most need of ordinances for their confirmation and growth in grace. The Lord Jesus would not quench the smoking flax, nor break the bruised reed, but gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them in his bosom.” None will question, that the liberty of mission churches, with respect to the admission of members, goes to this extent. Of all churches, those gathered among the heathen have most reason for asserting this freedom, since nowhere are the lambs of the flock so much exposed while out of the fold, and nowhere, comparatively speaking, are they so many.

Another thing is this. There are not several churches existing in one place, as in most of our towns, formed to a great extent on the principle of elective affinity. *All* who give credible evidence of Christian character, must come into one and the same church, or be excluded altogether from church-membership and the ordinances of the gospel.

Again, we should consider the extreme moral and social degradation of all heathen communities, in which mission churches are gathered. Read the first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans. Read the journals of modern missionaries. Consider the decline of mind among the masses of the people, under the long reign of

* Ch. XII., § 3.

paganism; the paralysis of the moral sense and conscience; the grossness of habits, physical and mental, in speech and action, in domestic life and all social intercourse. Consider the absence of almost all those ideas which lie at the foundation of moral elevation in character; the absence of words, even, to serve as pure vehicles of holy thought and sentiment; the absence of a correct public opinion on all things appertaining to manners and morals; and the constant and all-pervading presence of polluting, degrading, soul-destroying temptations.

Causes such as these had their effects in the churches gathered by the apostle Paul, as we see in his Epistles. When the Apostle directed his attention, for instance, to the church at Corinth, on which he had bestowed so great an amount of labor, he found occasion to lament the many who were carried away by false teachers, the disorder of their worship, their irregularities at the Lord's Supper, their neglect to discipline immoral members, their division into parties, their spirit of litigation, their debates, envyings, wraths, strifes, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults. And how soon were a portion of the Galatians seduced from the gospel, and from their loyalty to the truth, and turned again to their old bondage unto weak and beggarly elements, observing days, and months, and times, and years; so that the Apostle confesses his fears that he had labored in vain among them. He thinks it needful to exhort the Ephesian church to put away lying, and to exhort those who had been dishonest before their conversion to steal no more, and those who had been avaricious and impure to have nothing more to do with fornication and covetousness. Four years after he had addressed his Epistle to the Ephesians, he informs Timothy that all his helpers in Lesser Asia were turned away from him, and even two who had attained to some distinction. Before

Imperfection of
the Apostolical
Churches.

the date of his Epistle, he evidently had not full confidence in some of the native pastors in that province, as appears from his address to them at Miletus. While at Rome, he writes that some in that city preached Christ of envy and strife, supposing to add affliction to his bonds; and at his first arraignment before Cæsar, not a member of that church had the moral courage to stand by him. Writing to the Philippians, he declares his belief that many church members were enemies of the cross of Christ, whose god was their belly, who gloried in their shame, and minded earthly things. In this same Epistle, he speaks in desponding terms of his native helpers, among whom were none like-minded with Timothy, but all sought their own, and not the things which were Jesus Christ's. He thought it needful to exhort the Colossians not to lie one to another; and the Thessalonians to withdraw from such of their number as walked disorderly. He cautions Timothy against fables, endless genealogies, and profane and vain babblings, as if such were prevalent in some of the churches; and speaks of preachers destitute of the truth, possessing corrupt minds, ignorant, proud, addicted to controversies which engendered envy, strifes, and perverse disputations and railings; and of some who had even made shipwreck of the faith, and added blasphemy to their heresies.

And it should be added, that the apostle John, somewhat later, declares that many "anti-christs" had gone out from the church because they did not really belong to it in spirit and character, and of course had been in it, denying, as he says, the Father and the Son.

Yet it is generally supposed, whether correctly or not, that the apostolical churches possessed as much piety as exists in any portions of the visible church of our country and times, if not more. Indeed the apostle Paul speaks of the Roman Christians, only a few years before the

date of his Epistles to Timothy, as being noted for their faith throughout the world. At the very time of his censures on the Corinthians, he declares that church to be "enriched by Jesus Christ in all utterance and in all knowledge," so that it came behind in no gift. And while he so seriously cautions the Ephesians, he ceases not to give thanks for their "faith in the Lord Jesus, and their love unto all the saints." He thanked God upon every remembrance of the Philippians; and when he wrote to the Colossians, he gave thanks for their faith in Christ Jesus, and their love in the Spirit and to all the saints. And how remarkable his testimony in behalf of the Thessalonians. He remembered without ceasing and with constant gratitude their work of faith, and labor of love, and patience of hope in the Lord Jesus Christ, wherein they had become followers of him and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost; so that they were ensamples to all that believed in Macedonia and Achaia.

The fact undoubtedly is, that visible irregularities and disorders and even scandalous immoralities, are more to be expected in churches gathered from among the heathen, and are at the same time, to a certain extent, more consistent with grace in the church, than in countries that have long enjoyed the light and influence of the gospel. While the primitive converts from paganism were remarkable for the high tone of their religious feelings, and the simplicity and strength of their faith, they were wanting in respect to a clear practical apprehension of the ethical code of the gospel. It is obvious, indeed, that Paul found the burden of his "care of all the churches" much increased by the deceptive, impure, and thoroughly wicked character of the age and countries, in which he labored as a missionary and apostle. His manner of treating the native pastors and churches, notwithstanding

their imperfections, is a model for missionaries and their supporters in our day; who ought to expect greater external manifestations of ignorance on moral subjects, and of weakness and sin, in churches that are gathered in Africa, India, the Sandwich Islands, and among the Indian tribes, than in churches that existed at Ephesus, Colossé, Corinth, and the cities of Galatia, in the palmy days of Roman civilization.

Primitive and Modern Mission Churches compared.

In reasoning, however, about mission churches among the heathen, whether ancient or modern, we should take into view the moral imperfections found in all human associations, in every land and every age. How many such imperfections do actually exist now, in the churches of which we are members, and how difficult it has been found to apply a remedy. How much time and labor has it cost, in our most favored States, so to affect the public sentiment of professed Christians, as to induce them universally to abandon and avoid the trade in ardent spirits; how hard to restrain multitudes of professors of religion from divers conformities to the world, having no countenance in the gospel; and how impossible hitherto, to create a public sentiment in any church, that shall give the sin of *covetousness*, for instance, the place expressly assigned to it in the word of God.

Churches at Home imperfect.

2. HOW FAR THE BOARD IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE TEACHING OF THE MISSIONARIES, AND FOR THE CHARACTER OF THE MISSION CHURCHES.

The Board is responsible *directly*, in the manner which has been described, for the *teaching* of the missionaries. It cannot guaranty, however, an entire uniformity in their teaching. That diversity in mental habits, opinions, preaching, and

The Board responsible for the Teaching of Missionaries.

social intercourse, which exists without rebuke among ministers of the same denomination at home, must be expected and tolerated among missionaries.

The Board can require of missionaries a compliance with their express and implied engagements, and the performance of all duties that are manifestly essential to the success of the enterprise. In respect, however, to these fundamental obligations, when the mind of the missionary has actually swung so far off from the line of his duty as to refuse a compliance, *enforcement* is commonly found to be out of the question; generally, no other course is left but to dissolve his connection. The Board cannot, therefore, be held responsible for the invariable continuance of its missionaries in the path of their duty, even in respect to matters of vital importance. Its responsibility is limited to the proper selection of fields to be cultivated; to the judicious appointment and designation of missionaries; to the constitution and laws by which the several missions are formed into self-governing communities; to the equitable distribution of the funds placed at its disposal; to the just and proper instruction of the missionaries in matters within the province of the Board; to timely and needful suggestions, admonitions, exhortations and appeals, fraternally addressed; and, finally, to a faithful superintendence of the missions, and a decisive intervention when there are manifest departures from duty in the missionaries.

It may be important to remark, that the responsibility of the Board for the *teaching* of the missionaries does not in any degree interfere with the responsibilities of ecclesiastical bodies in respect to the same thing. Such has been the result of an experience in this country continued through forty years. Within this period, the Board has had about two hundred and seventy-

This Responsibility does not interfere with that of Ecclesiastical Bodies.

five ordained missionaries laboring under its direction in heathen lands, and has extended its supervision to every department of their duty as missionaries; and there has never been the least sign of interference in the working of its own responsibilities and of those of the ecclesiastical bodies with which the missionaries were connected. But one case is recollected, in which an ecclesiastical body in this country has thought itself called upon to discipline a missionary, and then it deposed him from the ministry, and for the *same cause* that had *previously* led the Prudential Committee to dismiss him from the missionary service. The missions, when fully organized, may easily constitute themselves ecclesiastical bodies, if it be desirable; and the whole influence of the Prudential Committee has ever been to sustain them in their freedom and efficiency for missionary purposes. It is also true, that there has been no case, where the Prudential Committee has been called to act, in which doctrinal error was the only element of difficulty; nor has there been a case, involving doctrinal error as an obvious element, where it would have been convenient, or even practicable, for a mere ecclesiastical body to adjust it, *as a whole*. The cases were of a mixed and complicated nature; and they can hardly fail to be otherwise in distant organized missions among the heathen, and so must of necessity be regarded and treated as appertaining rather to the missionary, than to the minister. The elements of character, which constitute a man an efficient and faithful minister, are almost identical with those which are essential to the character of a good and faithful missionary. It can hardly be questioned that the body, which is accountable for the proper application of the funds contributed for the support of missionaries, is under solemn obligation to see that those funds are not wasted upon an unworthy or unfaithful missionary. Indeed it is impossible effectually to transfer this responsi-

bility to another body, which is not only remote from the missions but not in correspondence with them. And when the Board dismisses from the missionary work for a reason (as in the case above mentioned) that would make it the duty of an ecclesiastical body to depose from the ministry, there is no interference with the rightful authority of any ecclesiastical body. The Board does not assume to decide upon the fitness of an individual to be a minister of the gospel; but it is their duty to decide, and that intelligently, on his original and continued fitness to be sustained, by the funds committed to their disposal, as a missionary to the heathen. Nor is there more practical difficulty in adjusting his missionary, ministerial, and church relations in foreign missions, than there is in home missions; and no more in respect to those Congregational missionaries, whose ordaining councils cease to exist immediately after their induction into the ministerial office, than in respect to missionaries connected with presbyteries or classes in their native land. The contributors to the funds for foreign missions demand more evidence of faithfulness in the preaching of the gospel, than can possibly be in the possession even of the permanent ecclesiastical bodies scattered over our country. And they will hold the Prudential Committee and the Board responsible for seeing that no part of their contributions go for the propagation of error, either in doctrine or practice; nor will they have any serious doubt, in case radical or serious mistakes are committed or abuses occur in the discharge of this trust, that the fact will soon be known, and the evil be in some way corrected. The Board claims to be only an AGENCY,—for those, whether individuals or associated missionary bodies, who commit funds to its disposal for the support of foreign missions; and to see, that the funds thus committed are appropriated according to the

known wishes and expectations of the donors. Such is a simple, practical view of this subject, as it has existed ever since the Board was formed.

Experience has shown that the responsibilities of missionaries, as such, are all entirely consistent with the unimpaired existence and operation of their responsibilities in their distinct and separate relations as ministers. The churches and other ecclesiastical bodies at home, or in the missions, or the missions themselves regarded as ecclesiastical bodies, can take their own time and way for looking after alledged heresies or immoralities in individual missionaries. The Board no more needs to wait for the ecclesiastical body, than the ecclesiastical body for the Board. And the Board, conducted as it has been from the beginning, will be a help to the ecclesiastical bodies, whether church, council, presbytery, classis, or mission, in the discharge of their supervisory duties towards the ministers of the gospel laboring as missionaries in foreign lands. Nor can it cease to be thus helpful, except by a change in its course of proceedings, which would speedily prove destructive alike to its influence and its existence.

But while the Board is directly responsible for the *teaching* of the missionaries, it cannot be held to a full responsibility for the *results* of their teaching. Paul may plant, and Apollos water, but God giveth the increase. The Apostle to the Gentiles, as we have seen, had to sorrow much over the imperfect results of his labors. As *he* was not fully responsible for the character of the churches he planted, so *missionaries* cannot now be held to a full responsibility for the character of their mission churches. But the Board itself, as a missionary institution, (and the same would be as true were it an ecclesiastical body,) is even less responsible, than are its missionaries, for the character of the

How far Responsible for the Results of their Teaching.

mission churches. It is not even *directly* responsible for the character of those churches, but only through the missionaries; and through *them* only so far as it is properly held accountable for their character and teaching. If there be stupidity, ignorance, weakness, waywardness, perverseness, and even more scandalous wickedness in the mission churches,—as the history of the apostolical churches would lead us to expect, even when the churches are gathered by the most able and faithful missionaries,—they can be operated upon only through the missionaries. The Board cannot wisely address itself to those churches directly on the subject, nor can any other body of men in this country however constituted.

But when evils exist in the mission churches, the Prudential Committee may and must inquire, whether the *missionaries* are performing their duty. In one instance, some years ago, having reason to apprehend that admissions were made to a church in one of the missions without a proper attention to the evidences of piety, the Board, at its annual meeting, instructed the Prudential Committee to inquire into the facts, with a view to a correction of the evil; and such inquiries were made by the Committee, and with a satisfactory issue. Inquiries have also been made by the Committee, as to the teaching of missionaries in some of the missions, with respect to alleged irregularities and evils in mission churches, and in the social and domestic state of native Christian communities. So far as a judicious correspondence with the missionaries may properly affect their incipient measures in the formation of churches, and their subsequent teachings, and so far as those measures determine the character of the churches, and only so far, the Board is responsible for the character of the native churches.

Its responsibility in respect to the *existence of slavery* in several of the Indian churches, has some peculiar mod-

ifications in the circumstances of the case. Slavery in Indian Churches.
 The *incipient* measures for the formation of churches among the Cherokees and Choctaws, were taken thirty years ago—long before the subject of slavery came up for discussion among the churches at home. God was soon pleased hopefully to renew the hearts of a number of slave-holding Indians, and, upon giving credible evidence of piety, they were received into the church. What the missionaries *could then* have done, had they perceived all the bearings of that subject, cannot be known. The Indians are *now* partially civilized, and have organized governments. There are slave-holding whites without, who are supposed to take an interest in continuing slavery among them, and slave-holding whites within, married to Indian wives, and thus become a part of the nation; and their churches are organized Congregationally in one tribe, and Presbyterially in another. So that the missionaries, like pastors among ourselves, are obliged now to depend wholly on instruction and persuasion for their influence on the churches under their care. The religious liberty of those churches is to be respected. We should stand firm in support of our principles as to the rights of churches. Unless the missionaries are able to produce conviction—however desirable it may be that they should do it—the *churches* in the one case, and the *sessions* in the other, will vote in opposition to their views.—It is admitted, however, that the missionaries should do all in their power, in the exercise of their best discretion, to lead those What the Missionaries should do. churches and sessions to a right appreciation of their duty in this matter; and that they should use a direct influence at their discretion, to eradicate the evil of slavery, as well as all other evils, from the churches under their care. But it is obvious, that the Board, and the missionaries under its direction, have not precisely *the same*

degree of responsibility for the existence of slavery in the churches just referred to, that they would have in respect to churches yet to be formed among the tribes of the African continent, or were churches now to be formed, for the first time, among the Indian tribes.

How long we should bear with mission churches, that do not come up to our standard of duty, and may even greatly try our spirits, is what it may not be possible to decide. But we cannot doubt, that we should imitate the example of Him, who "maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust;" and who "so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life;" and who "is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." We need an abounding charity, a most Christ-like feeling, when we come to the question of withdrawing our support from churches we have gathered among the heathen, because they are slow in rising to our standard of Christian excellence. Should their deficiency be in any measure owing to our lack of knowledge on the subject, when we commenced our labors among them, it will strengthen our motives for forbearance. Before deciding a question so momentous to the interests of souls, and to our own future peace of conscience, it would be well to see whether we do not find in those churches the same spiritual results, the same living Christianity, and the same moral defects, that existed in the churches planted and nurtured by the Apostles; and whether the Lord Jesus does not bless them with outpourings of his Holy Spirit, though they cannot yet be persuaded, in all important respects, to follow us.

We should remember, that none of us are *principals* in this work of missions. The work is Christ's, not ours,

and we are all his servants, to do his will. And if we look into our own churches, and consider their manifold imperfections, we shall find abundant cause for charity and forbearance in respect to all churches gathered among the heathen; and if we study the intellectual and moral condition of the pagan world, we shall only wonder that the first generation of converts from heathenism can be so far raised in the scale of Christian morals and general excellence of character.

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