

THE PECULIARITIES OF THE AGE.

A

S E R M O N,

PREACHED BEFORE THE

General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church

OF THE UNITED STATES,

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SERMON.

MATTHEW XVI. 3.

CAN YE NOT DISCERN THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES.

OUR God, and the nature he has called into being, delight in variety. None but the infinitely wise and mighty One could plan and bring into existence such diversity and similarity as abound wherever the handy-works of Jehovah are seen. Every human face, mind and heart, has its own peculiarities; and yet there is a strong generic or family resemblance in all. No two ages, nations, individuals, or children, require precisely the same government or instruction. Whoever prescribes for the civil, mental, or moral well-being of man, should carefully study the minute peculiarities of those he aims to benefit. Without such ability to adapt means to wise, known ends, all attempts to subserve the interests of mankind must be mere empiricism.

Revelation prescribes no minute rules for the civil and ecclesiastical government of men in the widely diversified countries and ages in which they may live. In many cases, external ceremonial observ-

ances are evidently designed to change with the varying exigencies and character of each generation or community to which they are applied.

The Chinese government, and the pretended infallible, unchangeable laws of Mohammed and the Pope, proclaim the folly and madness of stereotype plans for the civil and moral advance of large communities for many successive ages. Their antique, lifeless, stationary position, bids all who would influence and bless their race, to beware lest they misunderstand the signs of the times in which they are called to act.

If in our associated benevolent efforts we would augment the happiness of man, and extend the cause of Christ, we must carefully study the characteristics of the community and age for which we labor. This is emphatically true in relation to Home Missions. The friends of this cause in the United States, should seek the most comprehensive and minute knowledge of the signs or peculiarities of our age; what we should aim to do for it, and how we should attempt to do it. To these three inquiries,—*What are the peculiarities of our age; what should we aim to do for it; and how should we attempt to do it,*—I invite your candid attention.

I. *What are the peculiarities of our age?*

They are marked. Every day strengthens the conviction, in each reflecting mind, that our times are eventful, far beyond any which have preceded us; and that they are pregnant with causes of change, surpassing all the strongest imagination has been able to conceive.

Man appears roused from the dreamy sleep of ages, and, discarding all historic instruction, seems intent upon exploring every path in the physical, intellectual, and moral world, which he can possibly enter. Every thing stable, which ages have proved safe, useful and right, is now to be abandoned for some wild, untried experiment. Europe, in all matters of civil, political and religious interests, is like a boiling caldron, or a vast, burning, pent-up volcano. Her prisons, inquisitions and gallies, are crowded to excess ; and the arm of her executioner has grown weary in its cruel, bloody work. Thousands have forsaken their homes and native land, to seek an asylum where constitution and law still have power to save. Millions more are waiting, yea, even sighing for the eventful hour when they may plunge into the bloody strife which shall close their eyes in death on the battle-field, or aid in hurling princes, kings and priests from their high places of oppression and power. Multitudes there have identified the Christian religion, and its teachers, with the worst enemies of their rights and the most cruel authors of all their suffering and woes. The influences under which they have been crushed and excluded from the light and all opportunity for intelligent self-control, have led them to hate the gospel and its friends, in common with all whose wealth and official standing have given them power to oppress the laboring poor.

But while thus borne madly forward in determined opposition to all religion and human authority, even the masses have recently been taught most effectively to distrust their ability for self-govern-

ment, and to fear the real tendencies and consequences of atheistical socialism and red-republican domination. The minds of thousands in Europe, who have been intoxicated with the newly discovered right to think for themselves, have thus been brought into a more favorable position for the reception of the truth as it is in Jesus, than they have occupied since the gospel was first preached to the Gentiles. Multitudes see no hope in despotism or in infidel agrarianism. They seem waiting for the stability and freedom the gospel alone can give. This is emphatically true of the inhabitants of Piedmont.

Asia, too, begins to show the signs of waking. Even the changeless empire of the Celestials can now be convulsed with revolutions, and sympathize with the pecuniary, civil and religious movements of outside barbarians. India, east and west of the Ganges, and large, rich islands of the adjacent ocean, are forced to perceive some of the advantages of Christian civilization.

Millions in Africa are stretching out their hands for the enlightenment, social advantages and civil freedom which the gospel, in the lives and hearts of civilized Christian negroes, can give.

Our country is deeply interested in these signs and movements abroad. *We must* be in sympathy with our whole race. Every convulsion and revolution in the old world sensibly affects us. Every year brings us into more intimate connection with all mankind. We cannot be uninterested spectators of any important pecuniary, civil, or moral change, in any of the great powers on earth. If either

member of the brotherhood of nations suffers, we must feel the consequences.

Millions esteem us the warmest and most consistent friends of civil and religious liberty. The oppressed, every where, know they can find a refuge here. Thousands every month are consequently coming to our shores, claiming early access to the polls, and mingling their radical, political and religious views with the elements of our future national destiny and character. Few ideas now float on the surface of society in any part of the globe, which do not soon become incorporated into the influences contributing to our national weal or wo. The effect of these imported ingredients of public opinion and principle calls for the most serious, profound reflection. In our day, even in the land of the Puritans, it may break down the sanctions of the Sabbath, tear from under our most valued civil institutions the sure foundations a sound morality alone can give, engage us in the most cruel religious persecutions, plunge us into most ruinous wars of conquest and aggression, or lead us, in the madness of a radical, agrarian spirit, to abolish the office of President, unite the Senate and House of Representatives in one body, and require the members of this house to resign at the bidding of their constituents. Thus, in fact, placing all legislative and executive authority in the hands of the multitude, ever exposed to be led, by designing demagogues, to adopt the most hasty, contradictory and oppressive measures.

All can see a strong anti-republican, anti-representative tendency among the later importation of

political refugees. They are not content to share in common with us the protection and liberty we enjoy. They insist that we shall discard the wise maxims of our noble sires, and adopt the extreme views to which they were naturally led while contending with absolutism in its worst forms. In their new position, only able to perceive civil and religious liberty like men as trees walking, they incline to push every thing to the extreme of licentiousness.

Moreover, multitudes of our native born citizens have so spent the formative period of their lives in frontier settlements, far removed from the restraints of well-ordered, civil government, and the sacred influences of the Sabbath and house of God, that they are not fully imbued with that reverence for our constitution and love of our laws, which is an essential element in the character of a good republican citizen. Even our thoroughly educated young ministers, thrown into such a frontier population, far removed from the example and advice of their elder brethren, are not always free from dangerous, radical tendencies.

As a nation, we are in imminent peril. Our constitution and laws are not respected as they have been, as they should be. In all sections of the land, religious teachers, in some instances, preach resistance to our wisest and most important civil and criminal enactments. They lend their influence to pour contempt upon our constitution, legislators, executive officers, and the purest and most gifted men the age or world has known. This wild fanaticism, originating among unprincipled men, has so

diffused itself into some of our religious denominations, as to produce the worst consequences there.

The open disciples of Christ have thus been led to denounce each other, and to expend the strength they should have employed for the spread of the gospel, in destroying the influence of its mutual friends. Influential ecclesiastical bodies, covering the whole land, and bringing together as a band of brothers in periodical meetings prominent men from every section of this grand Republic, have recently been divided on geographical lines, and enlisted in efforts to sunder every tie binding them to one fold, and to make the separation the most violent and abiding. In accomplishing this wicked, divisive work, professed Christians, yea, ministers of the gospel, have been foremost in trampling in the dust written constitutions, which we know must be regarded as sacred, while unrepealed, by every nation that would maintain self-government.

Funds, and literary and religious institutions, have been perverted with a disregard of principle and the rights of others, which would be appalling among the most ungodly and dishonest men. Large bodies of Christians have been excluded from their dearest religious privileges, guaranteed to them by solemn, well-defined written compacts, without the form of trial, or show of right or law.

Some branches of the church have thus reacted upon the mass of ungodly men, with the most baneful results. Under such varied, yet combined influences, the strong tendency in our land, in this age, is to the most ultra, fatal radicalism—an agrarianism which will not be content while wealth, mental cul-

ture, moral worth, or official standing, gives one man the least advantage over his fellows. It requires us to confess, that we and our fathers have mistaken the principles on which a free people should be governed.

- All the safeguards under which these confederate States have prospered beyond every precedent, must be abandoned for some of the wild vagaries which have often led their dupes to confusion and ruin. All restraint and punishment of crime is to be discarded, as fit only for a savage, heathen state. Every man is to be left free, guided by his own gratified passions and lusts, to do what is right in his own eyes. Inspired truth is to yield all authoritative control over the mind and heart of man. But, thanks be to God, the tendency of such views and demands, has been clearly perceived by our wisest and best men, in church and state. With great success they have employed the strength of their gigantic minds, and the patriotic, pious philanthropy of their noble hearts, to rally the true friends of liberty and Christian civilization to the rescue. The struggle may still be protracted and severe; but if the lovers of freedom, law and religion, are not recreant to their duty and interests, the final result must be glorious. Though our enemies are numerous, and intent upon mischief, still, conscious of their power and designs, and ready to live for the civil and religious emancipation of mankind, we shall find, in the end, they that be with us are more than they that be with them. In an open field and fair fight, truth and its friends have nothing to fear. But, brethren, let us know that the moral conflict in

which the world is now enlisting, with all the activity and energy of this impulsive age, in its intensity and consequences, overshadows all the great physical battles which have deluged the earth with blood.

Let us, then, with these prominent peculiarities of the age before us, inquire,

II. *What ought to be done for it?*

In seeking the best interests of this age, what should we aim to do?

I answer, in general terms, we should labor to convince all men that *those* countries, and those *only*, are *free indeed*, which the Son maketh free. Then the multitude will more easily be led *so* to receive the gospel, that it shall work out its legitimate influence, and bring them to adopt those sound, pure, conscientious principles, which fit nations to govern themselves. We must aim to convince leading minds, and, as far as possible, the masses too, that the more lenient the laws, and the freer the people, the more urgent the necessity for that self-control, which only can obtain, where intelligent, personal piety give tone and force to public morals. I say, *intelligent* piety; because we accomplish little for the well-being of a restive, radical age like our own, unless we convince men that the Bible is a revelation from heaven, containing nothing but truth, as unchangeable as the attributes and being of Jehovah. We *must* have something certain on which we can safely stand, and rest the deductions of reason and experience. Without this, we shall ever drift on a changing, recurring public sentiment, like

a sailing vessel in a polar sea. With it, we shall be free; having fixed land-marks, light-houses, and a faithful chart and tried compass to launch out upon the broad ocean of civil, political, and moral science, with the assurance, that, whatever may be the result of our explorations, we can return to a known, safe haven, when our researches are brought to a close; that we are not forced continually to resort to and settle first principles, which our God has revealed to us with unerring exactitude.

We should labor to satisfy the nations that they must possess the moral ability to govern themselves, before any civil revolutions can greatly improve their condition or prospects; that some of her noblest sons are right in openly avowing that Europe, most of all, needs *religion* to capacitate her people to be free; that without this, no new system of government can largely benefit the millions struggling to break their chains, and hurl their despotic rulers from their thrones, only as it opens the way for them to secure this religion; and that the unprincipled red-republicans and socialists, now so clamorous in favor of liberty, once in power, will not only destroy kings, nobles, priests and moneyed aristocrats, but plunge the people into a lower depth of wretchedness and ruin than were ever fathomed before.

In this land we should aim to secure an intelligent conviction that the Word of God is a boundless field of unerring, seminal truth, from which we may ever continue to garner a rich harvest of the most important practical knowledge and wisdom—a sure standard, by which all our maxims and plans may be safely tried. Being so free, and so accustomed to think

independently, this is for our life—indispensable to our safe existence and progressive pecuniary, civil, and moral advancement. If possible, the whole energizing, ennobling, saving power of the gospel should be brought to bear upon the heart and life of every immigrant, who here seeks a home among the free. Our work will not be done until this whole people is imbued with the living principles of the gospel, and all its friends, divided as they may be into different sects, shall deeply feel that they *are* constituent parts of the same vast sacramental host, gathered to conquer this world to Christ, and here bound by the command of their chief Captain, though not all in the same company, battalion or division, to recognize each other as brethren engaged in the same glorious cause, in which they can never hope for success, while they here fail to respect each other's rights, or to 'yield subjection to the powers that be, ordained of God for the punishment of evil doers, and for the praise of them that do well.' In a word, as the severe virtues and enduring morality which the gospel alone can beget, have mainly contributed to give us ability to govern ourselves, and as they must furnish the like capacity to all nations, who would prosper in the experiment which has succeeded so triumphantly here, we ought to aim, with the best powers we have in this land, to give the truth, as it is in Jesus, free course, till all men, in admiring approval, shall exclaim, 'Behold, how blessed is that people whose God is the Lord;' till the whole race of men shall perceive that Jehovah and his commands, civil rulers, human laws and executive officers, are revered and obeyed, most certainly and

cheerfully, where the people are the most free. And conversely, that the people are invariably in the end, the freest, where constitutions and laws, human and divine, and their authors and executive officers, are most uniformly respected and promptly obeyed. Here is our only hope—in an increase of vital godliness, coupled with a clear perception of the heavenly origin, design, spirit and reach of the gospel. Mere instruction and knowledge, increased indefinitely, will not now avail us. Stronger emotion, powerful revivals of religion, dissociate from a distinct and comprehensive view of fundamental gospel truth, will not meet the exigency before us. They have sometimes augmented the evil. We must unite these two elements. The understanding must be fully convinced, the mind instructed, and the heart filled with love to God and man, according with individual worth. This is the end the signs of the times bid us aim to secure.

This leads us to inquire, in the third and last place,

III. *How should we do the work our age requires to be done?*

In foreign lands, we should aim to establish American Evangelical churches under the pastoral care of thoroughly educated, and truly pious preachers of the gospel, wherever any considerable number of our citizens find a home. It is inconceivably important that we should fairly represent our moral and religious character before the millions struggling to be free. Multitudes, who mainly form their opinion of our national character

and of the causes of our great success from what they see in Americans abroad, will soon cast in their lot with us. From what they have seen, they very naturally conclude that we are the most irreligious, God-despising people in Christendom, and that we are the freest because we are thus. It will be more easy to correct this false idea while they are in their native land, through the lives of our fellow citizens residing there, than it can be after they have come here with such erroneous views, strengthened by a desire to enjoy the gain of such ungodliness. Then we should enter every door which Providence opens for the preaching of a pure gospel among the thousands who have been excluded for ages from all access to scriptural truth. Our safety as a nation of freemen, and our more private personal interests, demand this of us. For a religion which will purify the fountain of emigration to the United States, will soon make its influence felt in all the elections, legislative halls and domestic circles in our land. Put the Word of God into every family in Ireland, and qualify at least one in each household to read it with understanding, and there leave it free to work out its appropriate influences, and we should soon see all our interests, pecuniary and religious, most happily affected by the change. The number of worthless mendicants in our streets, and of vicious wretches in our poor-houses, hospitals and prisons, would be perceptibly diminished.

But, paradoxical as it may at first appear, our great work abroad is chiefly to be done at home. Our field is the world, and we best aid in its cultivation by building each over against his own house.

For when we have imbued the millions here with a higher respect for rulers, a conscientious obedience to law, an intelligent belief, and affectionate, operative reception of gospel truth, then our countrymen who visit the old world will not only correctly represent our real character among the nations, but they will become missionaries, and labor to bring all men into the liberty wherewith the Son maketh his people free. Here, too, multitudes are studying our national character, and its effects, some of whom are daily corresponding with almost every hamlet in Europe.

How then should we do, for this "home of the free," the important work the age requires us to do? This is the main question before us. How can we secure in the multitude, through our whole land, that stable, law-abiding, God-fearing influence, which necessarily flows from an intelligent belief and affectionate reception of the gospel. We know it is Christ's plan to do this, and to save the souls of men through the agency of the living preacher. All subordinate instrumentality he mainly calls into active being by those who devote their whole time and strength to this one thing.

Our literary institutions, free and Sabbath schools, Bible, tract and various missionary societies, not only originated in the prayers, labors and plans of an educated ministry, but they are now, year by year, chiefly dependent upon the fostering influence of those who preach the gospel. They would soon droop and die, were the pulpit to treat them as unworthy of continued care. In hundreds of cases we see this, where a church, for a few years, is deprived

of the stated labors of a pastor. Many of the Sabbath schools, which have been reported as the origin of churches, derived their being from the influence of the living preacher, and have annually gathered their moral and pecuniary strength mainly from the pulpit. Not that thousands of devoted, influential laymen, do not spend their wealth and time in efforts designed to aid these noble enterprises of the age ; but we should know that, in most instances, they do this because they have been stimulated to it by those who serve at the altar.

Over five-sixths of all the colleges and universities in our land, under God, owe their existence and continuance to the plans and labors of living preachers ; and many of our State universities, the one-sixth excepted, are taught and continued in being by the same agency. Probably none of them would have been established, had not the pulpits of our land been filled by a liberally educated, pious ministry. Between forty and fifty theological seminaries in the United States owe their existence exclusively to this instrumentality.

Then, be it remembered, this agency is the most economical ; laymen, of equal mental culture and talents, will not perform the labor assigned to one consecrated to the work of the ministry for the compensation he receives. Even our uneducated colporters cost the Society, which sends them out, an average sum more than double that paid by the American Home Missionary Society to her liberally educated preachers, who wear out in the hardest pioneer service.

The intellectual and moral improvement in all the prominent towns in our north-western States, where educated, *pious* ministers have stately labored during the last twenty years, far surpasses the most sanguine expectations of the friends of Christ. As I contemplate the glorious change effected under my own eye, by the agency of these self-denying men, I am often ready to exclaim, "Behold, what hath God wrought!"

More than this. We can see the divinely appointed agency for the great work before us surely effecting its designed end. Even in those new States, which are filling up with a heterogeneous population more rapidly than has been known on earth before, the ministry, in number and influence in the period named, has wonderfully gained ground. The population of Indiana, in 1830, was 343,031; in 1850 it was 988,734, showing an increase little less than three-fold; while the Presbyterian ministry increased in that period from 32 to 180, being almost six-fold; the ministry increasing more than twice as fast as the population.

Illinois, in 1830, had 157,455 inhabitants, and 858,298 in 1850. During these twenty years the Presbyterian ministry increased from 13 to 179, being a relative advance nearly three times greater than that of the inhabitants. In 1830 Missouri contained a population of 140,445, and 684,132 in 1850; while the number of Presbyterian ministers increased from 10 to 89 during this period; being an increase about twice as rapid as that of the inhabitants. Here remember, that the number of vacant churches organized and new fields opened

by this ministry, is now much greater in proportion to those supplied, than it was twenty years ago. Besides, although a large share of this increase in population has been German, we have taken no account of their evangelical ministers who have come to our help during this period. Nor have we referred to the Congregational ministers and churches in these States, all of whom have found a home there since 1830, and are really identified with us. From these facts we not only learn, that in the work before us we should mainly rely upon the gospel faithfully preached by an educated, pious ministry, and the influences associated with this agency, but that we have every reason to hope for ultimate, complete success.

Let us, then, for a few moments, consider the peculiar advantages we, as a denomination, possess, for the accomplishment of this great work. We may thus better appreciate our privileges and responsibilities.

We owe our existence, as constitutional Presbyterians, to the catholic, brotherly spirit we have cherished towards other denominations. Had we been willing to abrogate the Plan of Union with the Congregationalists, and to refuse all co-operation with the German, Dutch, and Lutheran churches, and to concentrate all our benevolent efforts upon Societies and Boards controlled exclusively by the members of our General Assembly, the divisive, revolutionary measures of 1837, '38, would never have been adopted.

We continue to maintain an organization separate from our old school brethren, because we believe it

vastly important, in this country and age, that Christians, especially, should set an example of cheerful obedience to law, and a scrupulous regard to written constitutions. For if they do not, who will? If they trample these under their feet without rebuke or compunction, what but despotic power can save us from mob violence and perfect anarchy?

Moreover, we are governed by an ecclesiastical constitution more in unison with our political and civil institutions than obtains in any other denomination. Our whole church polity is strictly representative and republican; so much so, that James I. of England, who was nurtured in the bosom of the Scotch Presbyterian church, and understood her system well, openly avowed that he must renounce Presbyterianism, or lose his crown and its arbitrary power.

The Presbyterian form of government is seen to be equally obnoxious to the friends of absolutism and agrarianism—to those who, under the influence of either extreme, would trample upon all law, order and right.

With us, the people elect all their officers—trustees, deacons, elders and pastors. Either can be removed from office, in a constitutional way, when esteemed incompetent, or when they are unacceptable to their constituents, even when not charged with immorality or delinquency in duty.

Our constitution can be constitutionally amended to any extent the majority of the membership may desire. The private members, as Presbyterians, are not required to subscribe to any general, or particu-

lar creed. And even the officers may make exceptions to any part of our Book they do not approve, and be inducted into office, their objections notwithstanding. None of them are required to receive the Confession of Faith as the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. They adopt it only as "the system of doctrines taught in the Holy Scriptures," while they simply declare "their approval of the government and discipline of the Presbyterian Church in the United States." The Word of God is thus most fully recognized as the only book which can authoritatively bind the conscience.

Surely, no sane man, not entirely blinded by narrow, bigoted, sectarian prejudice,—no one, who approves of any constitutional rules, or the maintenance of law and order,—no one, who is not ready to denounce the government of our country as oppressive, can possibly object to Presbyterianism on account of its aristocratic, anti-republican, illiberal tendency. For, in all the working and remodelling of our constitution and laws, lay representatives have an equal voice with the preachers. In licensing as well as in ordaining ministers, the laity have an equal vote. In the choice of pastor and in the election of all church officers, the lay members, in mass meeting, have the exclusive control, subject only, in some cases, to the approval of presbytery. No friend of a republican, representative government, can ask for more here, unless it be that our deacons and elders, like our civil officers, should be elected for a limited period. This can, and I trust will be demanded, till our constitution is so amended, that our ecclesiastical representatives shall

hold office in the same manner our civil judges and senators now do, or as deacons and elders did in the Swiss and Holland Presbyterian church.

No objection, on the other hand, can be reasonably urged against Presbyterianism on the ground that it is too democratic, and consequently liable to be used as a tool of restless, radical, lawless men, for agrarian, discordant ends ; or that it puts too much executive power in the hands of the masses, who are always exposed to be swayed by designing men till they adopt the most extreme and contradictory measures ; or that, by removing all representatives, (helps and governments,) it puts the pastor in a position in which, with ordinary capacity and shrewdness, his power may become next to absolute ; the exact place sought by all ambitious, arbitrary rulers ; the one Louis Napoleon secured, when he saw he could not manage the French assembly of a few hundred selected, intelligent men, and swept away all intermediate power, and made his appeal to the millions and was sustained.

No church in the world, in all these respects, is so perfectly in harmony and sympathy with the government of the United States as our own. In no other denomination are the rights of the private members so wisely and safely guarded, and the authority of the ministry so well defined and so restrained within such narrow limits, while all the conservative, stable advantages of a republican, representative government, are most fully secured.

With such a form of church government, and with a thoroughly educated ministry, we so commend ourselves to the patriotism and good sense of

the nation, as to secure a most favorable position for the accomplishment of the great work Home Missions have to do in this age and country. For our most intelligent, patriotic men, of all political creeds, see, or think they see, that if the experiment of a free, republican government, proves a failure here, it will be occasioned either by putting our destinies too much into the hands of the uneducated, immoral multitude, so rapidly increasing by the dark streams, having their sources in our large cities and foreign lands, or by weakening too much the representative, intermediate power, designed to lay its restraining hand impartially upon this restless multitude, and upon ambitious, designing men, seeking through this channel unlimited control.

Moreover, we increase our ability to be useful by teaching the duty of co-operation with all evangelical Christians in every good enterprise. For we have never learned that our Master has called us to spend our time and strength in efforts to cripple the influence of any denomination laboring to multiply churches, which hold the great fundamental truths of the gospel. With good reason, as we think, for preferring our own church to any other, we perceive abundant occasion to pray that the greatest success may attend the plans and exertions of every evangelical protestant denomination. We have been taught, that when they have done all in the power of their hand to do, there will still remain more waste ground, in the moral vineyard, to be cultivated, than we can possibly occupy. We see reasons for stimulating them to greater efforts in the good work to which we are mutually called. For

we readily perceive, that all they do is not only so much gained to the general cause, but also an important advantage to us. It creates a stronger public religious influence, which will ultimately increase the number who will aid our benevolent designs. So we believe all our successes will aid them. We would be more strongly impelled to the most vigorous exertions to extend the influence of our denomination, by the conviction that we thus most effectually stimulate other churches to greater activity in the same way.

We will only claim that there shall be no interference; that each denomination shall be free to organize and strengthen its own churches in its own way, and be cheered in every effort to wrest from the kingdom of darkness all the territory which can be won from thence. We demand the same liberty, in conducting our church extension efforts, that has ever been enjoyed by the Massachusetts and other New England Home Missionary Societies. We ask for nothing more. We will have nothing less. It is our birthright as freemen. No denomination, society or servant of any churches connected with any benevolent organization, shall, unresisted, wrest this from us.

By our connection with co-operative societies uniting various kindred sects, we extend our influence over all parts of the land. We have nothing like a division on geographical lines.

Our Presbyteries, Synods and General Assembly, all, *de facto*, missionary societies, and covering the whole field to be reclaimed, are the most wisely adapted, with the officers and committees they

should appoint, to carry forward the work of church extension in all parts of our land. We need no ecclesiastical Boards, composed only of ministers and elders connected with our General Assembly, to secure success here. We are free to confess to the world, that we esteem it dangerous to give exclusively, to the same men, the influence, the power if you please, which may be acquired by the right to govern the church, and at the same time to dispose of the funds she contributes for the spread of the gospel. On this account, should any branch of the work in which we are engaged, require new or more efficient agency to collect and disburse funds, we would call in the aid of a Committee, or Board, selected from the most competent contributors, whether officers or private members of the church, and have them make their reports to the ecclesiastical body which appointed them, or to the contributors holding their annual meetings during the sessions of that body.

But our Presbyteries, Synods and General Assembly are abundantly competent to call into the field, and to direct the efforts of all the agents necessary to assist in training our feeble churches to support their pastors, to secure supplies for those which are vacant, and to explore the whole unoccupied missionary field, and organize churches where there is reason to hope they will live and be useful. No co-operative association *can possibly* do this work peaceably and efficiently for us. No agent *can* here act with acceptance and success for different denominations at the same time ; especially if

they are intermingled through the counties and States in which he labors.

The time has been, when there was reason to hope that the Congregational and constitutional Presbyterian churches were so perfectly united and nearly identified, that they would agree so to divide the missionary field between them, that each, by mutual consent, would occupy a separate geographical section. But as that evidently cannot be, we must now, if possible, fix upon some plan by which we can maintain the warmest friendship for each other, and even rejoice in our mutual successes, while acting side by side in all our counties and States, and there only striving to excel each other in fraternal love and zeal in the work of publishing the gospel to every creature.

The providence of God has placed *us*, as a denomination, in a most favorable position to suggest and execute such a scheme. We can easily secure an efficient agent for each synod and presbytery, appointed and instructed by those bodies, conscientiously to abstain from all interference with any Congregational church, while he does the best he can to multiply and strengthen our own churches, and to furnish them with faithful, competent ministers, and request the American Home Missionary Society to give the necessary aid for their support. We can honestly invite our Congregational brethren to do the same, and assure them that we will rejoice in all they can do in any part of the field to gather the sheep, wandering over our broad prairies without any shepherd, into the fold of Christ, and to multiply the number of his friends; while we

rebuke any of our agents or ministerial brethren who may so far lose sight of the law of Christian courtesy, as to act the unfraternal part of seeking to win over to us, or to disturb or divide a church quietly associated with them. We can satisfy all among them, who cherish the liberal, brotherly spirit which has ever characterized the denomination, that, while we have gathered many, who were educated Congregationalists, into Presbyterian churches, we have only sought to do it where we found them shut out from church privileges in their own fold, and in imminent danger of being led far astray; and that we will ever be grateful to them, if they will go in like manner and do the same for our destitute brethren; that we will cheerfully advise such members to unite with their churches, when living near them and removed from our own. We can safely promise them, that in the moral wastes of our new States there shall be no strife between them and us, as to the occupancy of any vacant field; for if they will take the left hand, then we will go to the right; or if they depart to the right hand, then we will go to the left, and be sure to find, in either direction, more than we shall be able to do.

Proclaiming this to be our plan for *church extension*, and employing suitable efforts to show that we honestly intend to adhere to it, let others do as they may, we are assured by the liberal, catholic spirit, so long and kindly exhibited by our Congregational brethren, that they will vie with us in giving efficiency and perpetuity to such a union of unselfish, fraternal efforts.

The signs of the times, the spirit of the age, the

welfare of our beloved country, the cause of Protestantism, and the interests of religion through the world, loudly demand such a harmonious, confidential, affectionate system of church extension between us. There can be no good reason for separation or estrangement between these affiliated denominations and the American Home Missionary Society. They should act together with all the harmony and love, which have characterized their union through many years past. We can now well consent to make serious sacrifices to secure such a result. We can afford to do so for Christ's sake, and the general interests of his friends.

But it is important that we should all know, and let our Congregational brethren and the American Home Missionary Society distinctly understand, that our denominational interests would be promoted, if indeed we have any such interests separate from the greatest prosperity of all evangelical denominations, should *they*, from henceforth, *refuse* to co-operate with us on such a liberal, unsectarian plan, as we have proposed. For we have lost in numbers and efficiency, by this union of efforts during the last ten or twelve years, far more than we have gained in pecuniary assistance.

Probably more than one hundred churches, organized by our presbyteries, and connected with them in confidence and love, have been wrested from us by missionaries of the Society to which we give all our Home Missionary funds. We did the hard, pioneer work of exploring the field, forming the churches, and, in many instances, of erecting a house of worship, and then had all taken from us, where

a large majority of the members were strangers to the Congregational form of government; and all this, by brethren we had introduced into the field as friends. On this account, recently, we have had far more occasion to call our new churches Esek or Sitnah, than Rehoboth. (Gen. xxvi. 20—22.)

We have submitted to this state of things in our new States, thus far, for the sake of peace and the advance of the truth, with the best spirit we could command, being confident that the great body of our Congregational brethren will frown upon all efforts, on the part of their agents or missionaries, to interfere with our organized churches, while they will choose to employ their wealth and energies in building on their own foundations, where the people are perishing for the bread of life. But we should not, for one moment, be deterred from taking a single wise step for church extension, for fear, that on this account, the American Home Missionary Society will refuse to aid in the support of our missionaries. For while we feel bound to give this Society no occasion for offence, and are grateful for all pecuniary assistance really afforded us through this channel beyond our own contributions, we know we are now abundantly able, in this respect, to provide for all our men. We may be certain it will do our wealthy churches great good to be roused to this glorious work, as the Free Church of Scotland was, cut off from foreign aid. While, therefore, I love the American Home Missionary Society and its officers with unabating, confidential affection, and believe there is no sufficient reason why they should withdraw from us, or we

from them, still I would not turn to the right or left in accomplishing the great work before us, an hair's breadth, under the influence of any threatened or apprehended action of any society or denomination of Christians. We are not in a position to think of supplicating favor of any being but God alone. If we only remain true to him and to ourselves, we shall be free to look right on our own appropriate work in the great sacramental host, marshalled for the conquest of the world, certain that we best subserve the interests of all our coadjutors there, by leaving them free to pattern after us, while we take possession of and safely guard all we can possibly win from the kingdom of darkness.

What greater advantages, then, for the accomplishment of the work before us, can we possess, ask, or desire? Shall not these, coupled with the known results of the present struggle between the friends of truth and error, rally all our pastors, elders, deacons and private members, to the best efforts they can make to multiply the number of thoroughly educated, active, self-denying ministers, and to give them every facility to occupy and faithfully cultivate every moral waste in our land? Shall we not from henceforth esteem it a part of our vocation, by pushing our conquests, with energy and enlightened zeal, into every unoccupied field, to stimulate and encourage all evangelical denominations to more aggressive, efficient labors in the same cause? Do not the interests of our race and the glory of God demand this? Do not the signs of the times call *us* to such a work? Do not the



energized activities of this peculiarly hurried age teach us, that whatever we do for the world's conversion, we must do expeditiously and with our might? Brethren, judge ye.



