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DELIVERED

IN CONNECTION WITH THE ANNIVERSARY

OF THE

FOREIGN EVANGELICAL SOCIETY,

IN THE REFORMED DUTCH CHURCH, LAFAYETTE PLACE, NEW-YORK,

ON SABBATH EVENING, MAY 7, 1843;

AND SUBSEQUENTLY REPEATED,

BY REQUEST OF SAID SOCIETY,

IN ALBANY AND PHILADELPHIA.

By WILLIAM B. SPRAGUE, D. D.

MINISTER OF THE SECOND PRESBYTERIAN CONGREGATION IN ALBANY.

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NEW-YORK:

PUBLISHED BY JOHN S. TAYLOR & CO.

145 Nassau-Street.

1843.

*mono*  
*Evangelize*  
*Lafayette College*  
*1/17/36*

HOPKINS & JENNINGS, PRINTERS,  
University Press,  
No. 111 Fulton-Street, New-York.

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TO THE  
REVEREND ROBERT BAIRD, D. D.  
THE CONSTANT, EARNEST, AND EFFICIENT  
FRIEND OF THE CAUSE,  
TO THE ADVOCACY OF WHICH THE FOLLOWING PAGES ARE DEVOTED,  
**This Discourse**  
IS INSCRIBED,  
WITH EVERY SENTIMENT OF RESPECT AND GOOD WILL, BY  
HIS FRIEND AND BROTHER,  
W. B. S.

## S E R M O N .

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ACTS XVI, 9.

*There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, COME OVER INTO MACEDONIA AND HELP US.*

AND who is this man of Macedonia — this midnight visiter, who is interrupting the Apostle's repose by calling upon him for labour? Is it really a man with flesh and bones? Or is it some divinely commissioned spirit-messenger? Or is there some miraculous impression upon the mind of Paul, *as if* he saw the face, and heard the voice, of a man? The record would seem to imply the latter; for it is said that "a *vision* appeared to Paul;" but all that is essential for us to know is, that it was some supernatural instrumentality by which God conveyed to the mind of his Apostle a knowledge of his will. Paul and his immediate associates had projected a missionary tour — first in one direction, and then in another; but God in some way signified to them his disapprobation of

their purpose; and while they were at Troas, undetermined whither they should direct their course, the Apostle, through the instrumentality referred to in our text, received an intimation of God's will that they should go and labour in Macedonia — a country into which Christianity had not hitherto been introduced. It was one of the inhabitants of this benighted region, that appeared to Paul in the vision, imploringly asking his aid; as if he had said, — “We are in circumstances of the greatest spiritual need — are sitting in the darkness and shadow of death; come over and help us: help us to that gospel which is the light of the world, and which has been committed to you for the benefit of the world: help us to the hopes which it inspires — to the consolations which it yields.” Paul, as he was wont to do, obeyed his Master's will: he went into Macedonia, and the hand of the Lord was with him, working wonders of grace through his instrumentality.

God speaks to his ministers and to his churches now, as truly as he did in the days of the Apostles; and he speaks as intelligibly, and as authori-

tatively; so that neither disobedience, nor ignorance, nor even hesitation in any ordinary circumstances, has the semblance of an apology. But instead of speaking to us in visions of the night, as he did to Paul, he speaks through the indications of his providence, and the suggestions of his Word and Spirit; and because these communications are addressed to our intellects rather than our senses, we are in danger, either through lack of attention or from some wrong bias, of failing to comprehend their meaning, and thus practically shutting our ears against the voice of God. My design this evening is to endeavour to convince all before me who need to be convinced, that God's voice is in the occasion on which we are assembled. No man of Macedonia communes with us in our slumbers; but the Macedonian cry from over the wide waste of waters, comes to us in a note of deep and earnest expostulation. There are men in France, and Switzerland, and other parts of continental Europe, labouring in a glorious work, who are saying to you, and to me, and to the whole American church, "Come over and help us." The fact that you are assembled

here this evening would seem to imply, at least that you regard their application as worthy to be considered.

I. Let me then, with a view to enable you to judge correctly of its claims, direct your attention, in the first place, to **THE NATURE OF THE WORK** in which your co-operation is invited; for no man feels prepared to help forward an enterprise which he does not understand.

1. My first remark is that it is an *arduous* work.

This will appear whether we consider the *character*, or the *number*, of those whom it is intended to reach.

*Who are they* whom this enterprise is designed to bring into the light and under the power of the glorious gospel?

They consist, as you all know, of Roman Catholics, and of nominal Protestants who, for the most part, while they profess a general belief in the gospel, reject or neutralize nearly all its fundamental truths.

It must be obvious to every one who reflects upon the general tendencies of human nature, as

they have been developed in the whole history of the past, that there is nothing to which men naturally cling with more unyielding pertinacity than the religion — be it right or wrong — which they have inherited from their ancestors. Nor is this feature in the character of man difficult to be accounted for. A man's religion is the most sacred of all his possessions ; for it is that upon which rest his hopes for eternity. The religion to which he is born, as it first gains possession of his mind, entrenches itself most deeply amidst his early associations ; and these associations remain like a wall of fire round about it. You may assail men's educational opinions on any other subject, and they will yield sooner than on this : here all that is sacred in religious hopes, all that is tender in filial recollections, all that is powerful in early instruction and example, arrays itself against you ; and hence we find that it is comparatively a rare thing that men adopt a different system of religion from that to which they have been educated ; and even men of great minds not unfrequently remain in bondage all their lives to great errors, which they have inherited as a pa-



rental legacy. And where the system in which an individual has been trained is a system of error, the difficulty of effecting a change is increased by the fact that men's moral tastes are naturally perverted — that they love darkness rather than light. Let a man of corrupt moral habits, who has been educated to a belief of the great truths of religion, be summoned to a rejection of those truths, and though even *he* will be likely to meet with opposition from the influence of conscience and of early associations, yet the desire to escape self-contradiction — the inconvenience of holding a creed that stamps every action of his life with flagrant inconsistency, may render it a comparatively easy matter for him to yield: but let a man whose heart is fully set in him to do evil, and who has been trained to a system of belief which is fitted to keep the conscience quiet in a course of sin — let *him* be called upon to renounce his self-justifying errors, and to receive God's truth in all its alarming and humbling import; and you will find that the whole head and the whole heart, the prejudices of education and the strength of depravity, will be in rebellion against the effort.

When that man abjures his errors, and receives Christ, and becomes a practical disciple, there will be a triumph of God's grace to be celebrated both on earth and in Heaven.

Now let us consider, for a moment, the bearing of this general truth upon the two great classes which our enterprise contemplates.

Look first at the condition of the *Roman Catholics*. Their system of belief is one which was held, not merely by their immediate parents, but by a long line of ancestry, extending from generation to generation, and from age to age. It is a system which claims to be the only true system, insomuch that all who do not receive it, are regarded as without any scriptural warrant to hope that they can be saved. It is a system wonderfully accommodated to man's corrupt propensities; exciting the imagination by its gaudy and imposing ritual, and ministering to that self-righteous spirit which would dispute with God the glory of salvation, by prescribing a round of senseless ceremonies in place of the living faith and the contrite heart. It is a system, moreover, which is founded in ignorance; which may be embraced and held

without the labour of thought; and every one knows that, with the mass of men, labour is no luxury. And in addition to all this, so complete is the tyranny which this religion exercises in countries where it is established, that it is often at the peril of a man's character, of his property, of his life, that he ventures to avow his rejection of it. We have some opportunity for observation on this subject here, where the system is modified and softened by a thousand nameless influences; for even here, the Catholic who renounces the faith of his education, is not unfrequently hunted as a wild beast of the forest. What then must be true of those countries where no such modifying influences exist, and where there is both the will and the power to punish the heresy of Protestantism according to its supposed demerits?

As for the nominal *Protestants* whose benefit also this enterprise contemplates — we do not say that their prejudices in favour of the religious system they have adopted, are fortified by such a diversity of influences, as are the prejudices of the Roman Catholic; still it is by no feeble tenure that they hold *their* system; for it is the opiate

which enables them to slumber while their immortal interests are in jeopardy — the armour on which they rely in their conflicts with a wakeful conscience. They glory in their Protestantism, and they will even keep jubilees in honour of the Reformation; while that which gives Protestantism its chief value — that to which the Reformers considered every thing else subordinate — the great doctrine of justification by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, they reject as the dream of ignorance or enthusiasm. Many of them are men of great talents, and great learning, and I may add, of great zeal in maintaining and propagating their views; and they stand strongly committed to their defence before the world. We cannot doubt that they will struggle hard against any opposing system that may be presented to them, and especially a system that casts out from the whole economy of salvation the idea of personal merit. And what we should expect from the nature of the case, is found to be in accordance with facts; in-somuch that a conversion from Rationalism to Evangelical religion, has often raised against the subject of it as bitter a persecution as if he had

passed from the Roman Catholic religion to Protestantism.

To these two classes of which I have spoken as comprehended in the design of this enterprise, I might add a third, made up to a great extent of the other two — I mean the *declared rejectors of Christianity*. The system of Rationalism varies so little from proper Deism, especially in the great matter of human salvation, that there is hardly occasion for distinguishing between them; and there are many who, while they avow their preference for the former system, show at least that they have no controversy with the advocates of the latter. And that the more enlightened Catholics are generally infidels, is a fact which I believe nearly all who have had opportunity of making observations, are ready to attest. The influence of those master spirits of Atheism who were instrumental in combining the elements for the French Revolution, is still felt all over the continent: there are Catholic infidels, and there are Protestant infidels, and there are infidels who belong to neither class, — operating through different channels, and yet in an important sense

united, in their opposition to all that is great and holy in Christianity. But all these are subjects for a converting influence — all included within the legitimate field of our enterprise.

Such is the character of the different classes in whose behalf we are called upon to labour; and the object contemplated is to bring the gospel in contact with their understandings, their consciences, their affections, so that it may exert its renovating, saving influence. And now who will not say that this is a matter by no means easy to be accomplished? Why how is it with our labours *here*, which are prosecuted under the highest advantages for success? Here, where there are no hereditary prejudices against Evangelical Christianity to be grappled with, where infidelity is looked upon as hateful, and no man is regarded the worse but the better for being a Christian both in faith and in practice — even here, we sometimes labour through a series of years — labour in season and out of season, and yet have occasion to exclaim, “Who hath believed our report?” What then is to be expected *there*, where there are false systems to be over-

turned, the prejudices of centuries to be subdued, the current of popular feeling to be resisted, and men must become converts to the truth, if at all, at the expense of their most cherished earthly prospects? If the soil that has been already broken and mellowed to our hands, seems sometimes to remain long barren, notwithstanding our best efforts at cultivation, what shall be said of that soil which the labours of the spiritual husbandman have rarely penetrated, and which has been for centuries, to a great extent, unvisited by the rains and sunshine of heavenly grace?

But *the extent of the field* to be occupied is another consideration that must enter into our estimate of the arduousness of this work. And on this point it is only necessary to say, that this field embraces all the countries of continental Europe, together with the Roman Catholic countries in distant parts of our own continent. In the southern part of Europe, including Italy, Portugal, Spain, France, Belgium, a part of Switzerland, the South of Germany, and the empire of Austria, the Roman Catholic is the predominant and almost exclusive religion. In the

northern part of Europe, including Holland, the northern half of Germany, Denmark, Sweden and Norway, and the vast empire of Russia, the great mass of the population is anti-Roman Catholic. The whole population of these several countries, together with that of the extensive regions inhabited by Roman Catholics on this side the ocean, cannot be less than a hundred and seventy-five millions: and yet all these are within the range of our enterprise. Take the map of the world and draw a line around those countries over which the darkness of Paganism and Mohamedism still broods, and then draw another that shall include the whole region that is cursed with a spurious Christianity, and you will perhaps be surprised at the proportion that the one bears to the other. You will see that it is no speck upon the globe that you are called to occupy by your benevolent labours; and that it is in vain to hope that the work can be accomplished without an extensive, and energetic, and well directed, instrumentality.

By both these considerations then — by the number as well as by the character of the subjects



for this work, estimate the difficulty by which it must be attended, and the amount of effort essential to its success.

But I remark,

2. That it is a most *important* work.

Any work is important that has for its object the extension of the knowledge and influence of the gospel; for the gospel brings glory to God in the Highest; the gospel is the power of God unto salvation. But there are some aspects in which *this* work would seem *especially* important; and that, whether we consider its more immediate or more remote influence.

In its more *direct* bearings, it is designed to accomplish the spiritual regeneration of a large portion of the civilized world. In many of these countries, especially in France, Switzerland, Germany and Holland, civilization has attained to a vigorous maturity; while true Christianity has been hated, resisted, and driven into exile. Now while the light that civilization diffuses over a country is in many respects favourable to the spiritual influence of the gospel, there are many of the benefits of civilization which Christianity

can advantageously appropriate in the extension of her triumphs. In the conversion of these civilized nations, will be included not only the sanctification of much that nature and culture have rendered praiseworthy and of good report — not only the consecration of a vast amount of learning and talent to the spiritual welfare of man, but the subserviency of the whole economy of society to this end : the labours of science, of philosophy, even of infidelity herself, in the cause of intellectual and social improvement, will thereby become a source of spiritual blessing, and be rendered tributary to the triumphs of the cross.

But this work is designed to exert a more *remote* influence by aiding the general cause of the world's renovation ; especially by removing obstacles, and supplying helps, to the foreign missionary enterprise. The spirit of Christianity is essentially a spirit of missions, because it is a spirit of benevolence ; and benevolence cannot survey the wide waste of Paganism and remain unmoved. It is not more certain, therefore, that the true religion will multiply its converts in these countries, than that it will increase the number

of those who will burn to see the wilderness bud and blossom as the rose ; of those who will not only give their property, and their influence, and their prayers, but themselves also, to the work of foreign missions. And this delightful effect has already begun to be realized ; for France and Switzerland have for several years been represented in the missionary work in some of the remotest and darkest parts of the earth. And there are countries in which their language, and habits, and general character, will secure to them advantages for the prosecution of their work, which English or American missionaries never could possess ; especially the advantage of national identity with the people among whom they labour. In the result of this effort we may expect that multitudes will hear the true gospel in their own language, and under circumstances best fitted to give it effect, who otherwise would live and go to their graves, in bondage to a most degrading superstition.

But while one effect of this effort must be to multiply the number of foreign missionaries, and of those too who have special qualifications for

that service in particular parts of the field, another obvious effect will be to counteract certain untoward influences by which the success of the gospel among the heathen is prevented; especially that which is exerted by the vices and crimes of nominal Christians. It is a maxim which fell from the lips of Him who spake as never man spake, that "the tree is known by its fruit;" and hence we find that men, all over the world, judge of the value of any religious system by its practical effects; and if those who profess to be its advocates are treacherous, and profligate, and debased, it is hardly possible but that their vices will be put to the account of their religion. Now what sort of a representation of Christianity have the heathen generally had in the lives of those who have sojourned among them, bearing the Christian name? Has it been a bright and steady exhibition of whatsoever things are honest, and just, and true, and lovely, and of good report; or has it not rather been the very opposite of this—an exhibition protracted from age to age, of the very worst features in the character of man? Is the Pagan called upon to

give up the vices of Paganism and practise the virtues of Christianity — he contemptuously replies, “ *Show* us the virtues of Christianity, that thus we may be assured of their reality before we undertake to practise them.” Or is he reasoned with in regard to the superstitious and idolatrous rites belonging to his religion — still he has the reply at hand, that if Paganism is superstitious and idolatrous, so also is Christianity; and from what he has seen of Christianity, no wonder that this should be his reply. Now do you not see that it is only necessary that the power of the gospel should be generally felt in Roman Catholic countries, to effect the removal of this greatest of all obstacles to the success of foreign missions? Let professed Christians who go among the heathen, whether as visiters or as permanent residents, whether for acquiring property or gaining knowledge — let them habitually show forth the spirit and power of Christianity, by practising the virtues of temperance, justice, truth, and charity, and at no distant period we shall see an influence exerted, before which the multiform abominations of Paganism will be passing away

like a morning cloud. I repeat — so long as Christianity is represented in those countries by idolatry, and treachery, and every species of crime, wonder not if, while the missionary lifts up his voice, the poor Pagan derides his message; if the call to come to the great Physician and be healed, is met with the scornful retort, “Physician, heal thyself.”

Who now will question the importance of this work? Is it not important that the renovating and saving power of the gospel should be felt by those vast nations, the mass of whom — civilized though they are — are as deep in moral darkness, and as dead in trespasses and sins, as the Pagans themselves? Is it not important that cultivated talent should be brought to do homage at the cross; that learning should come back to her place as the handmaid of truth and piety? Is it not important that the obstacles to the success of foreign missions should be removed on the one hand, and that new and noble helps to that cause should be supplied on the other? Then is this work to which we are summoned, important; for each of these objects is involved in its success.

### 3. It is a *sublime* work.

It is sublime in common with every other department of the missionary enterprise ; sublime, as involving the accomplishment of the purposes of infinite love ; as looking to eternity and to Heaven for its ultimate and most glorious results ; as exemplifying the power and glory of that gospel for whose extension and triumph it is engaged. But the sublimity to which I here refer is that which grows out of its peculiar associations. There are circumstances in the history of those countries which it more immediately contemplates, and especially in the history of France, which are fitted to elevate our views and feelings in the contemplation of it.

France was *among the earliest countries to feel the life-giving influence of Christianity*. Within a brief period after the Saviour ascended to Heaven, France heard the gospel which he had left with his disciples, and received large measures of his promised Spirit, and numbered a great multitude of converts to his religion. God's truth was proclaimed in her temples ; and the services were simple and scriptural ; and the sacrifice of a bro-

ken heart was all that was asked for. But that bright day was quickly succeeded by a night of ages — a night so dark and dismal that when the Watchman asked, “What of the night?” — the answer was, “Impenetrable darkness, to endure, for aught that appears, forever!” Now is there not something sublime in the enterprise which would re-establish the gospel in that country where pure Christianity so early had a lodgment? Must it not kindle a lofty fervour in the bosom even of the humblest colporteur who goes about the country distributing the Word of Life, and talking of Christ and his salvation, to reflect that the ground which he treads was trodden by Apostles; and that *his* enterprise is substantially the same which occupied *them*? Must he not feel as if the glorified Paul were looking down upon him; as if Paul’s voice from the third Heavens were cheering him on, and bidding him never falter in his work, till the green fields around him shall become an apt emblem of that spiritual verdure with which his country shall be clothed.

France has been *drenched with the blood of the saints*. For centuries she stood forth to the



world with the instruments of cruelty in her hands, and the purpose of murder in her heart, against all who dared to show themselves the faithful followers of Christ. And they must not merely die, but death must be a protracted scene of torture, as if to furnish to the eyes of incarnate demons a perpetual feast. Pagan Rome first poured out *her* vials of fury upon France; and then came Papal Rome, baptized still more deeply into the cruelties of hell; and age after age she kept an ocean of blood flowing around her; and if there seemed at any time to be a temporary respite, it was only the harbinger of a more terrible destruction. The deep recesses of the forest, the fastnesses in the rocks, the dens and caves which wild beasts inhabit, were all put in requisition by the faithful: and even here there was not security; for persecution would sometimes reach into the deepest hiding places, and drag out thence her subjects for martyrdom. Here again I ask, is there not something sublime in prophesying over such a valley of vision? Go forth, and proclaim the gospel there, if you can, without finding yourself the subject of an eleva-

ting impulse from the reflection that where you stand and preach, a noble army of martyrs fell. See if your imagination does not recognise in the very breeze that refreshes you, dying groans, as if from the ashes upon which you tread ; — songs of victory, as if from the martyr spirits who look down upon you from their thrones. Oh, it is a sublime office to preach the gospel any where ; but especially so, among the graves of those who have rendered their blood as a testimony to its truth and power.

France witnessed the Reformation in its early dawn, and was the theatre of some of its most glorious triumphs. Many of the brighter lights of that eventful period, such as Calvin, and Farel, and Beza, were among her sons. Ages have passed away since they went to their rest ; and the great truths which they proclaimed have long since become a by-word and hissing among the people. It would seem that God in his mysterious sovereignty, not only suffered the Reformation in France to be prematurely arrested, but suffered the darkness to return where the true light had begun to shine. And is there not something

inspiring in the thought of carrying forward the Reformation on the very spot where it was begun ; of entering into the labours of the great Reformers themselves ; of proclaiming God's message where the baptism of the Spirit and the baptism of blood were once so strangely and terribly commingled ? From the bottom of my heart I sympathize with those devoted and self-denied men who, at the greatest worldly sacrifices, are labouring to re-ignite the spirit of Reformation in France ; but I own that there is that connected with their enterprise which I cannot but covet. The field of their labours is consecrated ground. The most illustrious of the saints have stood upon it and preached the unsearchable riches of Christ ; and now they slumber beneath it, awaiting the glorious resurrection day. Must not faith become more vigorous, and prayer more earnest, and zeal more fervent, amid these august and hallowed associations ?

France has been *swept and scathed by a burning tempest of Atheism*. Other nations have changed the glory of the incorruptible God into images made like to corruptible men, and four-footed

beasts, and creeping things : but it was reserved for France formally to decree the banishment of Jehovah from his own world ; to vote him down by impious and frenzied acclamation from his throne in the Heavens. The preparation for that tremendous issue was not the thing of a day : the leaven of Atheism had been working for nearly a century, before it had diffused itself through the whole lump. Voltaire had done *his* work, and gone to his account ; and Rousseau had done his ; and Diderot and D'Alambert, and a host of others, had done theirs : they went to their own place before the harvest for which they had sown was quite ready for the reapers. But the day came at length ; and it was Atheism and blood, Atheism and blood, from one end of the land even to the other. That scene of horror, the very recital of which will make the ears of all coming generations tingle, ere long passed away ; but not so the consequences which it drew after it. France had indeed professedly restored Jehovah to his throne ; but the poison of Atheism had mingled itself with her very heart's blood ; and that poison continues to work with malignant activity to

this hour. Now is there not something sublime in the idea of administering an efficacious remedy to that great nation, whose whole head has become sick, and whose whole heart faint, through the influence of an infidel philosophy? Can the triumphs of the cross ever be more glorious than on that ground where the cross has been publicly reviled as the symbol of imposture? If Voltaire and his coadjutors are all gone to their graves, they still live and speak in the blasphemous productions which they have left behind them; and thus, in the most important sense, they are yet here, to be encountered by the friends of the gospel; and blessed are they who are permitted to see these giants of the empire of darkness fall at their feet. Oh, is not that a glorious conflict in which the very princes of Atheism, who could not be vanquished while living, are vanquished after they are dead?

What has been said may suffice to illustrate the sublimity of this work: I only add,

4. In the fourth place, that it is a most *hopeful* work: in other words, it is attended with the best prospect of success. This will appear, whether

we consider the door that has been opened, the instrumentality that has been devised, or the good that has been accomplished.

You all know that within a comparatively brief period the several countries which the design of our enterprise includes, were utterly inaccessible to all benevolent effort from abroad ; and though Christian compassion may have contemplated them with a weeping eye and a bleeding heart, yet they would not permit her to reach forth to them a helping hand. Compare the present with the past, in respect to France. Napoleon — terrible usurper though he was — in some respects devised liberal things. He restored Christianity to the nation, after years of ignominious exile had been decreed to her ; and though a Romanist himself, he placed Romanism and Protestantism on the same level. But Protestantism then was a mere mass of dry bones, upon which the breath from Heaven had not fallen ; and this, together with the perpetual commotion that was incident to Napoleon's whole career, neutralized the effect of that toleration which he granted, at least in reference to the spiritual improvement of the

nation. Napoleon's two immediate successors upon the throne showed little favour to Protestantism ; and every effort that was made for the promotion of a pure Christianity was watched with a jealous eye. But the Revolution of 1830, which gave to France her present enlightened monarch, gave her also the blessing of religious liberty. That Revolution removed the previously existing restraints upon freedom of opinion and freedom of action ; and converted all the pores of society into so many channels for a reforming, evangelical influence. And now it has come to pass that even in France, evangelical Christians may not only enjoy their own religion without the danger of oppression from the government, but may go abroad through the whole length and breadth of the land, circulating in open daylight the Word of Life, and calling upon sinners without distinction to be reconciled to God.

And what is true of France, in this respect, is true, in a greater or less degree, of most or all the other countries which this work contemplates. But a little while since, each of these countries had an iron door that was locked and barred

against all evangelical influence from without; and if any Christian assayed to do the work of the Lord on this forbidden ground, he knew well that he did it at the hazard of a martyr's death. There were dungeons there forming the very anti-chamber of hell, into which such persons were liable to be thrown; there were engines of torture there, befitting only the prison of despair, to which they were liable to be brought; and human wisdom could not discover by what means a different economy was to be introduced. But God in his providence has done what man in his weakness could not do, and in his blindness could not anticipate. The spirit of civil and religious liberty is beginning to pervade the nations like a universal element. Belgium, which has been one of the strong-holds of Papal influence, is now as open to evangelical efforts as France. Spain and Portugal also are beginning to relax; and so is Poland, and the Island of St. Domingo, and parts of South America, and even Italy. Austria alone, if indeed we *must* except her, is as bigotted to her errors, and as intolerant toward the truth, as ever. These countries are not indeed all



equally accessible to an evangelical influence : but they are all so in a greater or less degree ; and they are becoming more and more so every year ; and every thing indicates that the facilities are destined to increase, as the means of spiritual blessing are applied.

Besides — a system of vigorous instrumentality for the accomplishment of this work has already been put in operation. A little while since the whole work was to be done, but how, or by whom, no mortal could tell ; for the spirit of wisdom and activity in regard to this field had not yet begun to be poured forth. But now France and Switzerland — to say nothing of other countries — have their Bible, and Missionary, and Tract Societies, their Sabbath Schools, and their Theological Seminaries, and indeed an evangelical instrumentality corresponding in nearly every part with that which we are accustomed to reckon as among the brightest of the glories of our own land. And in addition to this, they have their system of *colportage* — an instrumentality which they originated, or rather inherited from their ancestors who lived in the Reformation, and which we are borrowing

from them, designed to bring the gospel in more immediate contact with individuals, and to break up the fallow ground in preparation for the higher labours of a spiritual husbandry. All these means have been actually devised and put in operation; and let their operation be continued and increased, in connection with such other means as the spirit of benevolence already awake, will originate, and the work ere long will be done. It was indeed certain that it would be accomplished before it was commenced—for the mouth of the Lord had spoken it; but the visible tokens of its accomplishment have increased as the actual instrumentalities have extended.

But we need not limit ourselves to the means that have been put in operation, in our estimate of the prospects of this work: we may point with grateful triumph to the *success* by which they have already been attended. What a mighty change has been effected in the Christian ministry! Less than thirty years ago, it was estimated that there were not more than three or four ministers belonging to the two National Protestant churches in France, who either preached or received the

gospel in its purity; whereas now this number is increased to about two hundred, making nearly one third part of the whole. And in addition to these, there are about sixty who are not dependent on the state for support, nearly half of whom are connected with the Wesleyan Missionary Society. And a corresponding change has taken place in regard to the circulation of the Bible. It is but a few years since that a long-continued and diligent search for the Sacred Scriptures in Paris, resulted in the finding of but a single copy; whereas now at least two millions of copies have been put in circulation within the limits of the empire;—a small number indeed compared with the population that need the Bible, but a great number, considered in reference to the brief period in which the work has been accomplished. And there is, as might be expected, a proportional increase in the number of devout Christians on every side: the circulation of the Bible, the humble expositions of the colporteurs, as well as the efforts of missionaries and of stated evangelical pastors, are together diffusing a goodly savour over the land. Blessed be God, the sepulchre in which Chris-

tianity had lain for ages has been thrown open ; and that voice which penetrates even the ear of death, has sounded forth the mandate, "Christianity, come forth ;" and having cast off her grave-clothes she *has* come forth, with a life-giving smile upon her countenance, and the blessings of salvation in her hand ; and France, bloody, atheistical France, is already beginning to welcome her reign.

II. Having considered thus at length the nature of the work to which we are called, we may next inquire **FROM WHOM THE CALL COMES** ; for before we render our aid, we naturally wish to know who they are that solicit it. Who are they then, that are bidding us come over to their help ?

We might consider this as the voice of the multitude who are sunk in ignorance and degradation, and who need to become the subjects of an enlightening and purifying influence ; for unconscious as they are of what they need, and reluctant even as they may be to receive it when offered them, their necessities still have a voice ; just as the wandering maniac would, by his wretchedness,

appeal to your sympathy and your charity, even though, in his frenzy, he might lift a weapon of death against you. But, on the present occasion, I shall consider this rather as the voice of our brethren abroad, especially in France and Switzerland, who are directly engaged in prosecuting the work which we have been contemplating. They earnestly and imploringly ask our aid in behalf of their hallowed enterprise.

In answer to the inquiry then, Who they are — I would say, first of all, they are *a company of Christian disciples*, redeemed by the same blood, and sanctified by the same grace, to which we owe our salvation. They are all bound together by their regard to a common Saviour, and their interest in a common cause. True, they speak a different language from ours, but they have the same hopes, and joys, and conflicts, and aspirations that we have; and when they and we shall speak with celestial tongues, we shall all have a common language, and shall join in the same new and noble song unto Him that hath made us kings and priests unto God. They belong to different nations from us; and yet they are in the highest

sense our brethren; for they and we have the same heavenly birth, and are travelling toward the same glorious home.

They are a *little* company. They make no display either of numbers or of means; for they are both few and poor. Especially are they so, considered in reference to the immense multitude upon whom they are to operate, and the magnitude of the work in which they are engaged. If it were an arm of flesh upon which they were to depend — if there were no divine promise and no Holy Spirit pledged for their success, we should confidently expect, labouring as they do at such fearful odds, that their enterprise would soon be reckoned among the things that have been. The record of their success will be the history of “one chasing a thousand, and two putting ten thousand to flight.”

They are a *self-denied* and *devoted* company. Some of us, and especially our respected brother\* who has sojourned among them as our representative and almoner, are familiar with many of them; and all, I believe, are ready to testify that they have never mingled in more fervent devotions,

\* Rev. Dr. Baird.

never witnessed stronger faith in the promise of God, or more of the simplicity and beauty of Christian character, than in the intercourse which they have enjoyed with these faithful brethren. And their piety is distinguished for nothing, more than a self-sacrificing spirit. They are not the persons to call upon these fellow Christians abroad for help, while they make no sacrifices themselves for the cause in which they are engaged: on the contrary, they cheerfully forego many worldly conveniences and comforts for the sake of that cause; and they evince a spirit which shows that they would not even count their lives dear to them, if its ultimate success should demand such a sacrifice. Why there are men enlisted for this object, who, if they had taken counsel of flesh and blood to devote themselves to some worldly pursuit, might have spent their lives in the highest degree of affluence and honour; but there were no earthly prospects, however attractive, that could detain them from this chosen field: they counted all things but loss for the honour of their Master and the advancement of his cause.

And this leads me to say, that they are a *well-*

*trained* and *enlightened* company. Of course I do not mean to say that *all* our foreign brethren who are labouring in this cause are highly educated men ; but I mean that intelligence, and a high degree of intelligence, is concerned in giving direction to the enterprise. And more than that—I mean that there are in that little company some of the brightest intellectual ornaments of the age ; and as they cannot hear me across the ocean, I may speak the names of some of them. There is Merle D'Aubigné, whose work on the Reformation has already proved itself a work for the world, and has thrown an enduring halo around his name. There is Gaussen, who has lifted a strong voice in favour of the inspiration of the Bible, in a work which, if Infidelity could blush, would turn her brazen face to crimson. There is Monod, a professor in one of their theological seminaries, and one of the best writers, and finest scholars, and most eloquent preachers, of the day. And there is another Monod, whose talents have placed him over the most influential Protestant congregation in Paris. And there are others whose names I cannot mention, whose intellectual endowments



would reflect honour upon any country that could claim them; upon any enterprise to which they should be devoted. Here is our security against being misled by ignorance or fanaticism. Such men as I have enumerated are no comets in the intellectual hemisphere: they are not the men to brood over Utopian schemes, or to engage in wild and hopeless enterprises. With great energy they combine great wisdom and caution; and what they *have* done in the past, is a pledge that we need have no fear as to what they *will* do in the future.

Last of all, they are the representatives of *the church*. And has not the church a right to be heard by her sons and daughters, when she appeals to them in behalf of her own enlargement? Has she not a right to tell the story of her conflicts and her wrongs, and to ask that the injuries of the past may be retrieved, and light and glory poured upon her onward course? Nay, they represent the *Head* of the church, from whose lips will hereafter fall the grateful benediction, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me;" and has not Jesus a right to require the healing of

those wounds which he has received in the house of his friends? They speak in the name of the *Sanctifier* of the church; and has this adorable Agent no claim to be heard by those on whom he has enstamped the divine image as an earnest of the heavenly inheritance? To reject their application then, is to dishonour not merely that little flock to which it is the Father's good pleasure to give the kingdom, but that good Shepherd who laid down his life for them, and that gracious Spirit who is pledged to bring them safely home. If we have no ear for the voice of Zion or of Zion's King, will not our very baptism testify against us; and can we marvel if we should be charged with having come to think lightly of atoning blood, and renewing grace, and mediatorial glory?

Such is the character, such are the circumstances, of those who are calling upon us to help them.

III. There is yet a third inquiry to be answered — viz., **WHAT KIND OF HELP** is it which they ask of us? for we are not prepared to meet

their wishes, without a knowledge of what their wishes are.

I remark, then, in the first place, that they do not ask us *to come in person* to their aid. In the Foreign Missionary enterprise, this sacrifice on the part of many seems essential to be made: inasmuch as the native inhabitants of those countries are all ignorant of the Way of Life and sunk in moral degradation, it is necessary that, for a time at least, the natives of Christian countries should sojourn among them, in order to proclaim the truths, to establish the authority, and to exemplify the spirit, of the gospel. But not so with the countries that are now passing under our eye. Here are native preachers already in the field, and gradually becoming scattered over every part of it; so that every man can hear the gospel not only in his own tongue, but without being tortured by a foreign accent. If there was wisdom in that divine ordinance that men should hear the gospel from the lips of their fellow-men, rather than from a higher order of beings, so also is there wisdom in that feature of the economy of the church which throws the work of evangelizing

the nations, so far as possible, upon native preachers rather than upon foreigners. Our brethren in whose behalf we are speaking, though their arms are always open to receive us as visitors, do not even ask us to share directly in their labours. They seek no help from us but that which we may render in consistency with our staying at home, and enjoying all the privileges which fall to our lot, both as American citizens and American Christians. What, then, *do* they ask of us?

First of all, they ask for our *sympathy*. You know how grateful sympathy is under almost any circumstances, especially in connection with the responsibilities of an arduous and momentous enterprise; — how it makes one strong both to labour and to endure, to know that there are other hearts beating in unison with his own, and deeply caring for the success of his efforts. These distant brethren, as we have seen, are engaged in a great work; and they are labouring, single-handed, in the face of a mighty opposition; with much indeed to encourage them on the one hand, but with much to put their faith and patience to a severe trial on the other. In these circumstances

they appeal to us as brethren for our sympathy. They ask us, when we think of our own favoured condition, sometimes to remember *them*. They send us the unostentatious record of their labours, and trials, and triumphs, and they expect us to bear a part both in their sorrow and their joy. And it quickens them to a higher and holier impulse to reflect that their cause is the cause of a multitude on this side the ocean, whom they will never see till they meet them beyond the vail.

They ask for our *prayers*. They have learned not only from God's Word, but from their own experience — from their experience as connected not only with their own personal growth in grace, but with this very work to which they have given themselves — they have learned the importance of a simple dependance on God's Holy Spirit. They know the connection between asking and receiving, and they send to us to enlist our fervent intercessions in their behalf. They implore us to give God thanks for the success that has already attended their labours, and to supplicate for them continually increasing

measures of blessing in the progress of their work. They ask us to commend their cause to the God of the sanctuary, to the God of the family, to the God who seeth in secret. And no doubt they watch for the answer to our prayers, in a richer effusion of influence from on high.

And last of all, they ask of us *pecuniary aid*. We know by experience that the prosecution of an extended missionary effort requires large funds. And as it is here, so it is every where : the gospel cannot be extended over a continent, or even through a single nation, but at vast expense. Look at the system of benevolent effort which our brethren have already put in operation, and see whether that system is to be sustained, especially whether it is to be extended to meet the exigency of the case, without liberal contributions from abroad. How are they to sustain their colporteurs and other missionaries, who go about the land dispensing the Word of Life, without funds ? How are their theological schools — those fountains in the desert — to pour forth their healthful and gladdening influences, without funds ? How will their Bible

Societies, and Tract Societies, and other kindred institutions designed to aid the great cause of moral renovation, live, without funds? And how will the fountains of their literature ever be healed, how will the taste for solid and profitable reading ever be established, without funds? In their poverty they ask us to help them. Yes, in their poverty—for they are poor, though they are surrounded with splendour and affluence. There are multitudes around them who are *able* to contribute all that they need; but what signifies the ability without the will? That very wealth, instead of being bestowed in aid of their object, is perverted to oppose obstacles to its success. They ask us to contribute, because the glorious work urges itself upon them, and they cannot consent to see it stand still. They ask us modestly, but yet importunately, and as becometh those who feel that the Lord is on their side, “Come over and help us, come over and help us do this work of the Lord; and what ye give shall be given back to you in the day of recompense a hundred fold.”

Such is the help that our brethren from afar

ask of us — our sympathy, our prayers, our pecuniary aid.

Thus I have endeavoured to answer the several inquiries, which the text, as connected with the occasion, suggests. But before you render your final response to this application of our friends, I propose to you to review, for a moment, the ground over which we have come, and see whether the claim which the occasion makes upon your charity, does not become clearer and stronger at every step.

What say you, then, of the motive that is suggested by *the nature of the work*? If it is an arduous work — arduous by reason of the number as well as the character of those whom it is to reach, is it not fitting that you should lend your aid, where your aid is so much needed? If it is a momentously important work — important in its more remote as well as more immediate bearings, should you not extend to it a helping hand, on the ground that your influence for good will circulate through innumerable channels, and will tell with mighty power on the great cause of the world's renovation? If it is emphatically a sublime work



—sublime from the great and holy, and even terrible associations with which it is surrounded— shall not this consideration also impart to you a fresh impulse, and will not your prayers grow warmer and your gifts larger, as you traverse in imagination the ground where Reformers preached and martyrs bled? If it is a work full of promise and hope— if the obstacles that formerly opposed it are now taken or being taken out of the way— if God in his providence is admonishing us that the fields are growing white for the harvest— will not your zeal in this cause mount up into a holy enthusiasm; and will you not help it with the more alacrity, as you have constantly accumulating evidence that it finds favour in the sight of the Lord?

Next, what think you of the motive suggested by the *character* and *circumstances* of those who solicit your aid? They are your fellow disciples, —baptized into the same adorable name, subjects of the same redemption, heirs of the same inheritance with yourselves; they and you are members of that community, the motto, the law, the bond, of which is *charity*; and unless you can show that the ocean was made to extinguish the

sympathies of Christians on one side of it toward Christians on the other, are you not under sacred obligations to minister to their aid? They are few in number and feeble in resources, while yet they are full of faith and zeal, and are ready to make the greatest sacrifices in the prosecution of their work. You cannot find it in your hearts to leave such men to labour without lending them a helping hand. Whatever you might say to the strong, I am sure you have too much of the generosity of Christianity, thus to put off the weak; especially the weak who decline no service that they can perform, no sacrifice that they can make. And the master spirits of this enterprise are great and noble spirits—men who are capable of giving it a wise direction and conducting it to the best results; so that, instead of being discouraged by the apprehension that your charities may be misapplied, you may feel a full assurance that they will be turned to the best account. And finally, these men represent the church which Jesus Christ has purchased with his blood; nay, it is the Redeemer's own voice that is lifted up in their necessities and their requests; and who of

us — disciples as we profess to be — will turn away from him that speaketh from Heaven? Oh it is a goodly fellowship to which this enterprise introduces us! Glorious, inspiring, is the thought, that while we fulfil the law of love, while we honour the Saviour who died for us, we are associated with the greatest and best of men in the greatest and best of causes.

And the *aid* which they ask of you — how reasonable, how practicable is it! No sundering of the ties of family and of country to go to the ends of the earth; no yielding up of the comforts of civilized life to encounter the privations and abominations of Paganism; no resort to a sickly climate — no exposure to a violent death: — they ask not this of you; but they ask your sympathy; and if you have Christian hearts, you cannot but feel for them. They ask your prayers — your believing, earnest, effectual prayers; and deny them *this* request, you cannot. They ask your pecuniary aid; and if you should decline giving anything out of your abundance, wonder not if the question should somewhere be asked, “How dwelleth the love of God in you?” They ask of

you nothing which you cannot bestow without any permanent inconvenience to yourselves or your families ; nothing, the bestowment of which will not make you better and happier, and have in it the elements of a blessing to those who come after you.

And now, in view of all these considerations, what answer shall I make in your behalf to the voice that comes to you to night from our brethren across the ocean, saying, "COME OVER AND HELP US?" Shall I tell them that France is full of silver and gold, and abundantly able to evangelize herself, without soliciting contributions, like a pauper or a beggar, from abroad? I hear you say, "No." Shall I tell them that our own great country is urging its claims upon us ; that the imploring voice of the West is heard in all our borders ; and that the cause of *foreign* missions languishes because we have not the means of sustaining it? Again I hear you say, "No." Shall I say to them that our resources are so miserably reduced that we are unable to help them as in other days ; and as we cannot do the thing that we would, therefore they must cease to expect any further

aid from us, at least till the revival of our country's prosperity? "No, no, no," I hear you answer yet again. And what then shall be your response? "Tell them," I think I hear you say, "tell them that we do not forget them in the feebleness of their means and the greatness of their work; and that the sympathising heart, and the bended knee, and the open hand, shall be our witness that we do not forget them. Tell them that when they appeal to our charity, we recognise a prior claim upon our justice; for the very vine and fig tree under which we sit was purchased partly by the blood of France. Tell them that our American church has just received a fresh baptism from the Holy Ghost; and that while we would testify our gratitude by our gifts, we expect many new associates in helping forward this glorious work. Tell them to keep up their faith, and their courage, and their zeal, and never to doubt that that ground which has received the seed of the truth steeped in the blood of the martyrs, will one day bring forth plentifully; and that if that day should not come until they and we have ceased to labour upon earth, it will come

soon enough to permit us to celebrate the harvest by a jubilee in Heaven." Do you say that this is the message that you will send them? Let this then be the message, and let it go, consecrated by the prayers, and fragrant with the offerings of the evening.

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