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PROF. BARROWS' SERMON
ON THE
CLAIMS OF HOME MISSIONS;
WITH THE
ANNUAL REPORT OF THE DIRECTORS OF THE WEST-
ERN RESERVE DOMESTIC MISSIONARY SOCIETY.

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THE CLAIMS OF HOME MISSIONS.

A SERMON,

PREACHED BEFORE THE

SYNOD OF THE WESTERN RESERVE,

During its sessions in the First Presbyterian Church in Cleveland,
Sabbath Evening, Sept. 24, 1843.

AT THE ANNIVERSARY

OF THE

WESTERN RESERVE DOMESTIC MISSIONARY SOCIETY.

Wright
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S E R M O N .

Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? behold I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest.—JOHN 4: 35.

RESPECTING the exact import of the former portion of this verse, expositors are not agreed. Some consider them as a proverbial expression, as much as to say, "When your seed is sown, you are accustomed to console yourselves for your toil by the hope of a harvest at the end of four months." In Palestine the season for sowing wheat and barley begins about the middle of October, and extends through December. The harvest commences, on the plains, in the latter part of April, and, on the mountainous tracts, it is not completed until the beginning of June. The interval of four months is, therefore, sufficiently exact for a popular statement of the interval between seed time and harvest.

Others suppose that, at the very time when the Lord uttered these words, four months were to elapse before harvest:

Upon either supposition the sense is substantially the same. "The hope of the natural harvest, though distant, animates you to vigorous efforts: how much more, then, ought the spiritual harvest, which is already at hand, to call forth your joyful exertions in gathering it!"

Our Savior probably uttered these words as he beheld the Samaritans, in great numbers, coming from the city to listen to his instructions; and he had reference, as the following verses teach us, to the preparation that had been made for his advent, and the success of his gospel, by the labors of the patriarchs and prophets of former generations.

The applications that might be made of the text to the various operations of the present day for the advancement of the Redeemer's Kingdom, are many. The present occasion makes it proper that I should confine myself to the field of HOME MISSIONS. Nor is it, by any means, a work of supererogation to bring before the minds of our ministers and churches the extent of this field, the richness of the harvest that is waving upon it, and its readiness for the sickle of the

reaper. Facts that cannot be gainsaid show that its importance in the scale of our benevolent operations has been greatly overlooked.

Here I shall refrain from instituting any comparison between the receipts of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions and the American Home Missionary Society, lest I should be understood as wishing to convey the idea that the funds of the latter Society ought to be increased by the diminution of those of the former.

To me no thought would be more painful than that of the reduction of the resources of the American Board, already too limited to enable it to prosecute with the highest degree of efficiency its present operations, to say nothing of those more extended efforts to which the openness of the field of Foreign Missions invites it.

I will simply remark that the receipts of the Western Reserve Domestic Missionary Society for the Synodical year ending in Sept. 1842, were only \$662,92: and during the year ending with the present sessions of the Synod they amount to not quite a thousand dollars.

Hence it follows either that the wants of this Society are not urgent, or that its claims are of a very subordinate character, or that they have been greatly overlooked by our ministers and churches.

That the first of these supposable inferences is correct will hardly be maintained by any one who is tolerably well acquainted with the field of Home Missions. He must be more deficient in information than it is reasonable to suppose that any person of the present audience can be, who does not know that the wants of the American Home Missionary Society, of which this Society is a branch, are of an exceedingly urgent character. The following extract from the last Report of the Parent Board exhibits these wants in the sober light of truth.

“It is painful to look over our *older states*, where missionary institutions have been in operation twenty, thirty, forty years, and find, in any of them, the work yet undone—nay, growing upon their hands—a far greater number destitute of Gospel privileges now, than when these benevolent efforts began. It is painful to see our *new states* doubling their population in the short period of ten years, and some even in five—that population gathered from the borders of ignorance and vice and ecclesiastical corruption in the old world, or, going out from the sanctuaries and family altars of the eastern and middle states, and becoming strangers to the house of God and apostates from the faith of their fathers—and to feel, that all we are doing for their salvation, is scarcely sufficient to meet the necessities of a tenth part of their number. It is painful to see our *settlements extending*—villages and cities springing up as if by enchantment, thousands on thousands seeking their homes for life, far away from the restraining, purifying influences of christian society, there to form and consolidate social organizations, which are to shape the character and seal the

destiny of untold millions of our countrymen, and to be able to do almost nothing towards pouring in upon these settlements, at this favored moment, the light of everlasting truth. And yet, such is our condition—such is the disproportion of the means employed by the church to the end to be attained, if our land ever becomes a mountain of holiness. As we look at this glaring disproportion—as we see how inadequate are our plans, how meagre are our resources for prosecuting the work which God has given us to do, we should enter upon the labors of another year with desponding hearts, did we not see, in the signs of the times, and in the everlasting covenants of God, sources of encouragement, unfailing as his power and inexhaustible as his beneficence.”

Is, then, the second of the above inferences correct? Are the claims of Home Missions of a very subordinate character, not worthy for a moment to be brought into comparison with those of Foreign Missions? I propose to show that this is not the case.

The position which I shall maintain is that THE CAUSE OF DOMESTIC MISSIONS IS, IN ITS IMPORTANCE, AND IN ITS CLAIMS UPON THE AMERICAN CHURCHES, SECOND TO NO CAUSE WHATEVER.

Here let us consider,

I. THE MAGNITUDE OF THE FIELD.

At first sight the disparity between the Home and the Foreign field may appear to be immense. The sphere of Foreign Missions embraces a large majority of the entire population of the globe. Its subjects are reckoned only by hundreds of millions. The very consideration of their multitude overwhelms us. Compared with the myriads upon myriads of the heathen, our own nineteen millions seem but as “a drop of a bucket.” But it must be borne in mind that our population is increasing with unexampled rapidity, while that of the most populous heathen nations, as, for instance, China and India, is, and must of necessity remain, nearly stationary. To indulge in doubtful speculations with respect to the future is an idle and unprofitable employment. But where the events that lie in the future may be certainly known by means of calculations based upon accurately ascertained data, they ought to exert upon our minds all the influence of present realities. Now the rate of increase of our population is not a matter of uncertain conjecture, but of accurate and long continued observation.

The following table exhibits this rate for every ten years since 1790.

From	1790	to	1800	35.02	per cent
“	1800	“	1810	36.45	“
“	1810	“	1820	33.35	“
“	1820	“	1830	33.26	“
“	1830	“	1840	32.66	“

As the native population goes on increasing, the *relative* increase from immigration must be diminished, even though the absolute number of immigrants should be greatly increased. From this source a gradual diminution of the total rate of increase will follow. But, as the additions to our population by immigration bear but a small proportion to the whole increase, this diminution cannot be considerable. Nor can any great diminution of the rate of increase of our native population be expected so long as vast tracts of new land remain, as now, to be occupied. When the whole territory of the United States shall have become settled, then the uniform experience of other nations shows that the rate of increase must be checked. But, for a very long period of time yet to come, it cannot be expected to fall as low as twenty-five per cent for every ten years.

What an amazing prospect, then, does the future present! According to the present rate of increase, the number of souls in the United States doubles in a little less than 25 years. The estimated population for the year 1850 is 22,577,000. If we suppose that, for the half century following, the population of the United States shall double once in 25 years, (and in all human probability it cannot fall much short of this) then it will amount in the year 1900, to more than 90 millions of souls.

But here will not be the limit of this overwhelming wave of population. It will still roll onward, pouring forth its myriads on every side, until it is reckoned by hundreds of millions. It will not stop until it has filled up all the immense basins of the Mississippi and the St. Lawrence; has flowed over the Rocky Mountains, and lined the shores of the Pacific with populous cities and villages.

There is another mode of estimating the future population of the United States which conducts us with equal certainty to results no less astounding. Rejecting the belt of barren land, about 300 miles broad, which lies east of the Rocky Mountains, the territory claimed by the United States may be stated in round numbers at 2,000,000 of square miles. The population of the State of Massachusetts amounted in 1840 to 98.36 to every square mile. If we suppose this whole territory to be populated with equal density, the sum will be 196,720,000. But the State of Massachusetts has by no means attained to the highest limit of population that can be supported with comfort; and, besides, a large portion of the soil of the United States is of a better quality than that of Massachusetts. Its average excellence is fully equal to that of France. According to Balbi, the population of France is 208 to every square mile. This will give 416,000,000 as the amount of inhabitants which the soil of the Uni-

ted States is capable of supporting with comfort. It is believed that this estimate falls far short of the actual capacities of our soil under the most improved mode of culture. But it is not the object of the present discourse to show what is *possible* with respect to the future population of our country, but what is *certain*. It is as certain as any event lying in the future that is known by the power of human reason, that the limit of 400,000,000, at least, will be reached in this country.

And how can we of the present generation mould the character of these future hundreds of millions? We can do it in the same way in which the early fathers of New England moulded the character of the present inhabitants of New England, and, through them, of the United States, to a very great extent. We must put forth all our energy to evangelize the present 19 millions of our population, and as far as we shall be enabled to accomplish this work, we may hope that it will, by the blessing of God, be perpetuated from one generation to another, and will grow with the growth of our country, until it has expanded itself into a sea of glory and blessedness. With the bright example of the Puritan fathers before our eyes, we need not ask how we can bear a part in the glorious work of illuminating and sanctifying unborn millions. To christianize the present population of the United States is our business. If we may be so happy as to accomplish this, then the promise of our Savior to his Apostles will be fulfilled to us, "I have ordained you that you should go and bring forth fruit, AND THAT YOUR FRUIT SHOULD REMAIN." Glorious words! What a blessed harvest are the toils of those who founded the noble institutions of New England bringing forth, now that they have gone to their final reward! Their fruit remains; and shall remain till the day "when the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat." On earth it shall remain till the archangel's trump, and in heaven, as long as God sits on his throne, and the myriads saved through the influence of these institutions cast their crowns at his feet.

And such fruit it is our privilege to bring forth—fruit that shall remain to bless all coming generations long after our bodies have returned to their native clay, and our spirits gone to render up to God an account of their stewardship.

But the absolute magnitude of the field of Home Missions, great as it is, constitutes but a part of its claims upon us for cultivation.

We proceed to consider,

II. THE RELATIONS OF THIS FIELD.

And

1. *Its relations to us as christians.*

Here it is sufficient to say that it embraces our brethren, united to us by the ties of consanguinity and common origin; of a common language, of common laws, of a common national destiny. Although this does not make the salvation of their souls, in itself considered, more valuable, it does impose upon us higher obligations to labor for their salvation.

The divine declaration that "if any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel," though originally made with reference to temporal affairs, holds equally good in spiritual things. Our primary obligations are to the souls of those with whom the providence of God has placed us in the most immediate connection. The salvation of a believer's children is not, in itself, of higher importance than that of his neighbor's children. But a higher obligation rests on him to seek their salvation based upon the peculiar relation which he sustains to them. The prosperity of a local church with which a particular christian is connected, is not necessarily of more value than that of other churches. But, because of the special relation which he holds to that church, a special obligation is devolved upon him to seek its welfare.

Now apply this common sense principle to the relation which we, as a nation, sustain to the unevangelized of our country. They are connected with us by closer ties than the unevangelized of any other country: and, for this reason, they have a primary claim upon our sympathies, prayers, and efforts. The Savior himself enjoined upon his disciples the observance of this principle. "He said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead on the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name *among all nations beginning at Jerusalem*. And this rule they every where followed. Even in foreign nations they preached the word first to their own countrymen, then to the Gentiles.

No one, I trust, will understand me as maintaining that we are not to carry the gospel to the heathen until all our own countrymen have been evangelized. This would be a very dangerous and pernicious doctrine, at war alike with sound philosophy, with scriptural precedent, and with the experience of the church in all ages. That for which I am contending is that while we seek, as we ought, the salvation of the heathen, we are not to neglect that of our own countrymen, to seek which is our primary duty.

It is a solemn consideration that God has laid upon us, the citizens of the United States, the responsibility of evangelizing our own nation, and this responsibility we must meet at the judgment-day. In the work of Foreign Missions other nations may co-operate with us, and supply, in a measure, our "lack of service." But if we fail in carrying the gospel to our own citizens, there is no other nation to do the work for us. The guilt of the neglect will be ours alone, and upon our heads, too, will fall the ruinous consequences. On the other hand, by faithfully performing this duty, we have such an opportunity of achieving permanent good, and good upon a scale of immense and progressive magnitude, as is granted to no other nation under heaven. Shall we not improve it, and reap the glorious reward?

2. Its relations to our national welfare.

The noble fabric of our free institutions was reared by our forefathers upon the foundation of evangelical principles. Had they not possessed minds enlarged, and liberalized, and purified by the assiduous study of God's word, far beyond the spirit of the age in which they lived, they could never have conceived of so wise a system of government as that which they established. Had not this system of government been nurtured in its infancy by the deep religious principle which its founders possessed and transmitted to their children, it could never have taken firm root in the hearts of the people, but must have been speedily swept away by the storms of man's unsanctified passions. And as our government was originally founded on evangelical principles, so it is dependent on these for its permanency.

It is pre-eminently a system of self-government. Its grand aim is to secure to each individual of the community all the personal liberty which is compatible with the general welfare. Now the experience of the world shows that the amount of personal liberty that can be safely allowed to each member of the body politic corresponds with the amount of intelligence and virtue possessed by the nation. No republican forms of government, no wise laws, no nicely balanced constitutions, can possibly secure freedom to those who are unfit for freedom. When the mass of the community have discarded the institutions of religion and the fear of God, and have become corrupt in their principles and practice, then their fierce passions will bring them into perpetual and violent collision with each other; engendering bloody riots, tumults, and insurrections: then party spirit will reign through the nation, filling the highest offices of the state with unprincipled men, ready at any moment to sacrifice the public welfare to their own aggrandizement: then anarchy and civil war will steep the soil in blood: and, lastly, military despotism, with his rod of iron,

will come in to rule by force those who have made themselves unfit to be ruled by principle. The name of freedom may remain, but it will be only a name: freedom herself will be no more.

It becomes us to learn wisdom from the history of other nations. Need we be pointed for the thousandth time to the example of revolutionary France, in proof that no nation can retain her liberty when she has lost her religion? On this point the history of the South American Republics is to us full of instruction. Why have they been the theatres of continual discord, civil war, and military despotism? The answer is at hand. The founders of these Republics had not the wisdom and comprehensive views of our ancestors: they had never breathed the pure air of civil and religious freedom: they were not thoroughly acquainted with the word of God, and did not make its principles the basis of their institutions: they understood not that first great principle of religious freedom, the right of private judgment: they were educated under a system of religion which forbids men this right: which takes both their consciences and their intellects into its own keeping: which dreads, as the greatest possible evil, the general diffusion of knowledge: whose two main pillars of support are the ignorance of the people, and the despotism of the priesthood. The governments which they founded were like the minds of their founders, destitute of all the essential elements of liberty and perpetuity.

Our ancestors, on the contrary, understood the principles of freedom: they saw that the amount of personal liberty which the members of any community can enjoy, must always be as its knowledge and piety: and they began, like wise master builders, by laying broad and deep the foundations of freedom in the thorough religious and intellectual education of their children.

To the prevalence of the gospel of Jesus Christ in the hearts of our countrymen we are indebted for the national prosperity which we have hitherto enjoyed, and to the same source must we look for our future prosperity. Why should we dream that human nature will not operate in this Republic, as it has uniformly operated in other nations? Without religion they have never been able to retain their liberties, without religion we shall lose ours: for in this respect we stand on a level with the rest of the world. We belong to the same apostate race of Adam. Our hearts, also, are, by nature, "deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." The tendency to corruption is as strong on this, as on the other side of the Atlantic. If we need the same Holy Spirit to regenerate our hearts, we need also the same gospel to sustain our free institutions.

The question respecting the permanency of these institutions, resolves itself into another question—Whether the great body of our nation shall be thoroughly evangelized, or shall be left to the vice and corruption which always reign where the pure gospel of Christ is not preached.

Let it be deeply impressed upon our minds that the perpetuity of our glorious institutions depends upon their being written, not in the statute book, but on the hearts of our citizens. The true defenders of our privileges national and religious, are not they who are striving to pull down one party, and to set up another. No party, whatever name it may assume, or by whatever principles it may profess to be governed, can possibly save the nation. It is but the creature of the people, and it will bear the impress of their character. If they be, as a mass, irreligious and unprincipled, they will drag the party with themselves to ruin.

No. The true defenders of our national privileges, are the men who are laboring with their whole soul to maintain, and diffuse every where the great principles of freedom which we have received from our ancestors: to give to the entire community the written word of God, and the preached gospel; and to extend the blessings of education, as did the Puritans, to every hamlet. Let these efforts be successful and the nation is safe: let them fail of success, and its ruin is certain.

3. *Its relations to the salvation of the world.*

The salvation of the most ignorant and degraded soul on heathen ground is, in itself considered, as valuable, as that of the strongest and most cultivated mind in the civilized world. But the conversion of the former may not result in so much good to the kingdom of Christ as that of the latter. When such men as Paul, and Luther, and Calvin, and Knox, and Doddridge, and Baxter, and Wesley, and Dwight, and Payson, are regenerated and sanctified, they become the means of bringing multitudes more into the kingdom. The same principle holds good with respect to nations. There are some nations whose evangelization is more intimately connected with the salvation of the human race than that of other nations.

And where can the nation be found that holds a more important place in this respect than the United States? There are two views of the relation which our country sustains to the conversion of the world which are exceedingly impressive.

First: it has been shown that the thorough evangelization of our nation will insure the permanency of its free institutions. Now the simple fact of the continuance of these institutions will exert an influ-

ence that must eventually shake the whole world. Towards this grand experiment of civil and religious freedom the eyes of the world are directed. The more enlightened and philanthropic are longing to witness its complete success, that they may use it as a lever to overturn the oppressive systems under which the old world has so long groaned. Meanwhile the abettors of despotism are hoping and prophesying that it will be a failure, for they know that its success will seal their doom. And as the apocalyptic serpent, (if we may be allowed to accommodate the passage to our present purpose) persecuted the woman when she fled into the wilderness, and "cast out of his mouth water as a flood, after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood;" so these men have conspired together to deluge our nation with a flood of papal superstition and corruption, hoping thereby to carry away our free institutions, whose silent but irresistible influence is undermining their thrones. And certainly they could not in any way employ themselves so directly to their own advantage, as by laboring with all their might to destroy the free institutions of the United States. But as "the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth," so, we trust, the torrents of superstition and corruption which they are vomiting forth upon us will be swallowed up by the universal diffusion of the glorious principles of the gospel. It will be so, if we are faithful to our high trust. If we take hold, in earnest, of the work of carrying the gospel to our own countrymen, all the machinations of Rome will be vain. She may make a desperate effort to hinder the progress of truth. But, where this prevails, her power is broken. She was born and nurtured up in the night of ignorance. Darkness is her element. The light of truth she cannot bear. It scathes her unholy eyeballs. Like a wild beast, when it is night, she creeps forth, and roars after her prey. But when the sun of gospel knowledge arises, she retreats, and lays herself down in her den.

Let us, then, carry the gospel to every hamlet of our nation, and the noble fabric of our free institutions will stand firm, and tyranny civil and ecclesiastical will melt away before it, until the staff of the oppressor is broken in all nations, and the whole earth is at rest, and is quiet, and breaks forth into singing.

Secondly: there is no nation in the world that possesses greater energy of character or mightier resources than the United States. As the Saxon is the predominating element in our language, so is it also in our national character. The history of England from the landing of Hengist and Horsa on her shores to the present hour is an illustra-

tion, on a stupendous scale, of the energy of the Saxon race. To this race we belong. It was because our fathers were Englishmen, and felt the blood of Englishmen coursing through their veins, that they took up arms, in their poverty and weakness, against the oppression of England, and maintained a successful conflict with the fleets and armies of the richest, the bravest, the best disciplined, and the most powerful nation on the globe. And the same vigor of character which carried them through the war of the revolution is now manifesting itself in all the departments of civil and social life.

Is there any enterprise too arduous and daring for our countrymen? Is there any obstacle capable of being overcome by perseverance, and skill, which they do not overcome? Is there any field of activity which they fear to enter? Is there any undertaking that promises good to the public from which they are deterred by the consideration of the difficulties that attend it? Is there a harbor which our ships do not visit? Is there a region to which the productions of our industry do not penetrate? If any one would witness the development of our national energy upon a scale of gigantic magnitude, let him visit our own West. The traveler who, a few years ago, wended his dreary way through the unbroken wilderness, can now scarcely believe the testimony of his eyes, when, in pursuing the same track, he finds himself in the midst of cultivated fields, adorned with neat willas. The forest has melted away before the woodman's axe, cities and villages have sprung up as if by magic, the howling of wild beasts has been exchanged for the lowing of herds and the bleating of flocks, and the plowman's whistle for the whoop of the savage. "The pastures are clothed with flocks; the valleys also are covered over with corn; they shout for joy, they also sing."

If such is the energy of our national character, our national resources are equally unbounded.

Look at our sea-coast! For nearly two thousand miles the ocean flaves our shores, wafting to us on his boundless and ever heaving bosom the riches of all nations. Every wind that blows from the East is freighted with the wealth of the Old World: every Southern breeze is fragrant with the spices of the torrid zone.

Look at our sea-ports crowded with the commerce of all countries! How majestically do our tall ships spread their wings of canvass, and speed their way to earth's remotest corners, and return again to pour the princely spoils which they have gathered in overflowing abundance into the lap of the nation!

Look at our mighty rivers, sweeping through vallies of unrivaled extent and fertility! What channels of internal communication! What outlets of our own, what inlets of foreign commodities!

Look at our vast inland seas, their waves heaving like the Ocean, and whitened all over with the canvass of commerce, and their shores lined with growing cities and villages!

Look at the exuberant fertility of our soil! It is "well watered every where like the garden of the Lord"—"a land of hills and valleys, and drinketh water of the rain of heaven." The barns of our husbandmen are filled with plenty, and their granaries are ready to burst with fulness.

Look at our mineral treasures! Our "stones are iron, and out of our hills we dig brass."

Look at our mechanical arts and manufacturing establishments! What exhaustless sources of wealth, ornament, and comfort! "Surely the lines have fallen to us in pleasant places, and we have a goodly heritage."

Now let all this energy of character, with all these unbounded resources at its disposal, be sanctified, and consecrated to the advancement of the Redeemer's kingdom, and the church will have at her disposal all the external means which she needs for the vigorous and successful prosecution of the enterprise of the world's conversion.

Does she need wealth? There will be as much wealth placed at her disposal as she can employ to advantage in this work. Even at the present time, notwithstanding the severe pecuniary embarrassments of the nation, there is money enough in the hands of our citizens, that might be spared, fully to sustain all the great benevolent operations of the day. But few of them, alas! have the salvation of their fellow men deeply at heart, and, therefore, the means cannot be commanded.

Here it is proper to remark that the vigorous prosecution of the work of Home Missions is one of the most effectual ways of advancing that of Foreign Missions. The operations of the American Board, and of other Boards operating on the foreign field, are seriously impeded, not because there are no resources in the country, but because there is not enlightened piety enough to place these resources at their disposal. Instead of \$240,000 a year, the American Board needs, and could economically expend at least \$1,000,000. Let the domestic field be so cultivated as to be made as productive as the State of Massachusetts, and this amount could be annually realized. Every effort of Home Missions in the West eventually contributes to swell the income of our Boards of Foreign Missions. There are multitudes of churches on this Reserve, that were formed and nurtured up to maturity under the fostering care of Home Missions, which

now send their annual contributions to the American Board, and some of them have already given more to the cause of Foreign Missions, than they ever received from the Home Missionary Society. Let this good work of evangelizing the West go on, and be consummated, and there will be no want of means for prosecuting the work of foreign missions.

But the foreign field demands not only money but men; well educated, self-denying, enterprising men. Convert the West, and she will furnish such men—men of intrepid spirits, and indomitable perseverance, ready to go any where and subject themselves to any privations and hardships for Christ's sake.

If, then, we contemplate the field of home missions simply in its relation to the salvation of the world, its importance is unlimited.

It remains that we consider

III. THE PREPARATION OF THIS FIELD.

Here it may be affirmed, without fear of contradiction, that there is no region in the world so fully open to evangelical operations of every kind as this mighty territory of the West, nor which yields, in return for a small outlay of means, so rich a harvest of spiritual good.

It is true that the obstacles to the progress of the gospel in the West are many and formidable, such as can be overcome only by the power of God's Spirit accompanying the dispensation of the truth. Still they are such obstacles only as the natural heart of man every where creates to itself through its enmity to God's holy requirements. Here, as elsewhere, "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." Here "men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil." Here they court delusion, and run into every refuge of lies that can screen their consciences from the brightness of revealed truth. Here their hearts and their hands are so engrossed with the pursuit of this world's profit, pleasure, and honor, that it is difficult to obtain for the message of God, an attentive hearing. But these obstacles are not peculiar to the West. They are the obstacles which human depravity every where opposes to the progress of the gospel.

But here, all those mighty ramparts which Paganism, Mohammedanism, Popery, and Despotism have raised against the gospel in the old world are wanting. Here the public mind is pre-possessed in favor of the christian system. Here perfect freedom is allowed to all religious denominations. Here the press, unshackled by the will of despots, whose interest it is to keep the people in ignorance, exerts its unrestrained power for good or evil over the human mind. Here all the habits of the people lead them to think and investigate for them-

selves. In a word, here truth and error, left each to its own resources, are brought to grapple in fair combat. And this is precisely the field which truth demands, and on which she has already won so many glorious victories. Give her free scope in the conflict with error and it is all that she asks. Where has she ever had, in the history of the human race, such a noble theatre for displaying her divine energy, as that which this young Republic presents?

The results of Home Missions show most impressively the preparation of the field. Wherever the stream of Home Missionary operations has flowed, its path has been marked by spiritual verdure and fruitfulness. The history of hundreds of churches in the West might be thus briefly told. The missionary came into a settlement that was destitute of the ordinances of the gospel. He found, perhaps, a handful of spiritual christians who had long been praying that God would send them one to break to them the bread of life. He found also a number of poor wandering backsliders from the Atlantic States, who had once made a profession of godliness, but, in emigrating to this western world, seemed to have left their religion behind, and were living in a wretched and dreary condition, with too much conscience to enjoy the world, and too little devotion to enjoy God's service. He found also a number of respectable men, who had never made any profession of religion, but who had lived long enough without the institutions of the gospel to witness the deplorable results of such a destitution. To complete the picture, he found a motley assemblage of unbelievers and errorists of different names. A meeting for divine worship was appointed: a few assembled: another was appointed: more came: the christians in the place besought him with tears to abide with them: he consented: their hearts were encouraged, and their faith was strengthened: one backslider after another was reclaimed: the attendance upon public worship steadily increased: a Sabbath school was formed: a church was organized: God poured out his Spirit and converted a goodly number of the impatient: their place of meeting became too strait for them, and they set themselves to the work of erecting a sanctuary: another, and still another revival followed: they felt that it was now time for them to relinquish their claims upon the Home Missionary Society, and to sustain the gospel by their own exertions: and now they contribute annually a handsome sum to the cause of Foreign missions. And in that community temperance, good order, neatness, refinement of manners, and schools for the education of the young have all followed in the train of the gospel.

The last Annual Report of the American Home Missionary Society, states that during the year preceding, 5,853 had been added to the churches under its care on profession of their faith, and 2,370 by letter—in all, 8,223, and that this number would doubtless have been larger, but for the brief period that had elapsed since the revivals referred to in the Report. Thus largely have these churches shared in the precious revival of the past year,—churches many of which owe their existence to the efforts of Home Missions, and where, but for these efforts, no dews of divine grace would, in all probability, have fallen in the late merciful visitation of God's Spirit.

But this very state of preparation which furnishes such facilities to the Missionary of the cross, furnishes also equal facilities to the emissaries of Satan. And these facilities they are not slow to improve. It is now reduced to a certainty that if the friends of Christ do not occupy the field, his enemies will. Rome has laid her plans broad and comprehensive to take this mighty region captive to her superstition, and is expending more money upon it than the American Board upon all her stations in the foreign field. If we do our duty, she cannot succeed. But if we prove slothful servants, God may allow her to triumph, and this will be such a curse to the world as fills the imagination with horror at the bare idea of its possibility. Other errors are also rife throughout the whole of this vast region, drawing away multitudes after them. Let us be fully aware, then, that if we do not occupy it for Christ, and that speedily, others will for Satan.

It has been shown that the field of Home Missions is one of immense magnitude—that its relations to us as christians give it a paramount claim upon us for cultivation—that upon its successful cultivation depends the permanency of our free institutions—that the salvation of the world is intimately connected with the success of the cause of Home Missions—that there is no region in the world in such a state of preparation as this field for evangelical operations of all kinds—and that if we do not speedily occupy it, for Christ, others will for Satan. The conclusion is inevitable that the cause of Domestic Missions is, in its importance, and in its claims upon the American Churches, second to no cause whatever, and that this importance and these claims have been greatly overlooked by the churches under the care of this Synod.

It is, therefore, the immediate duty of these churches to repent of their sin in this respect, and to give to the cause of Home Missions its proper place in their contributions. Some appear to be apprehensive that, by so doing, we shall diminish the resources of the American Board. Such a result I do not apprehend. Christian charity,

like maternal love, is of an exceedingly expansive character. It enlarges itself in proportion to the increase of the number of its objects. As the mother does not love her first born child the less because God has given her other children, so the christian that has cherished, with ardent affection, the cause of foreign missions, will love that cause none the less, because another cause, having equal claims upon his benevolence, is presented to his mind. Instead of giving *less* to the cause of Foreign Missions, he will, as a general fact, give *more* to the cause of Home Missions. It is true that there is a limit to his means, and when this limit is reached he can go no farther. Most christians, however, are far enough from having reached this limit. They could give much more than they do without transcending their means. Upon them we may expect that the full presentation of the claims of Home Missions will produce the effect of expanding their benevolent feelings, and drawing from them a larger amount of charitable contributions, so that while the cause of Foreign Missions shall not suffer, that of Home Missions shall be benefited. At all events, where a christian is giving up to the limit of his ability, there can be no objection to his making a just apportionment of his charities, according to the relative importance of the objects to which he contributes.

I now leave this subject with the ministers and churches, confident that, with the importance of the Home Missionary enterprise before them, they will act in the fear of God, and will not incur the tremendous guilt of failing to meet the very highest obligation that God imposes on them as citizens of this great Republic.

Our country! We love her with pure and holy affection. We are not ambitious to see her banner waving over nations conquered by violence and blood. God forbid that the thunder of her cannon should ever be heard, or the bayonets of her citizens should ever be smeared with human gore, in the accursed work of butchering the inhabitants of other nations, and subjecting them to the yoke of her military power!

But we are ambitious that our country, having first saved herself, by the grace of God, from the ruin with which sin and error are threatening her, should then be honored of God as the means of saving the rest of the world. The only armies that we desire to see issuing from her shores, are armies of missionaries, "clothed in fine linen white and clean:" having "the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue and people;" "casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into cap-

tivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;" causing "the wilderness and solitary place to be glad" for their visitation, and the desert to "rejoice and blossom as the rose."

This will be a victory indeed—a victory whose peans shall be not the groans of the dying and the wailings of widows and orphans on earth, and the shouts of demons in hell; but the rapturous hosanna of the new born soul here, and the everlasting "song of Moses and the Lamb" hereafter.

SEVENTEENTH ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

WESTERN RESERVE DOMESTIC MISSIONARY SOCIETY.

SEVENTEEN years have now passed away since the Western Reserve Domestic Missionary Society was organized. During these years, one hundred and eighteen churches have received aid from its funds, or, by its recommendation, from the funds of the Parent Society. Many of these churches have now become strong, and are able, in their turn, to extend the helping hand to others. A number of them have been enabled joyfully to contribute, each its hundreds of dollars in a year, to aid in the great work of sending the blessings of the gospel to pagan lands. Their strength, their ability thus to do good, and even to enjoy spiritual good, they owe, under God, to the fostering care of this Society. The amount of Domestic Missionary labor bestowed upon this field, both before and since the organization of this Society, has been its richest blessing. To it, some of our strongest churches owe, not only their present strength, but their very existence.

That a Society that has been thus useful, and the influence of which is still as much, and even more needed than ever, should be forgotten and its wants neglected by the very churches which have shared the most largely in the good that it has accomplished, it is not easy to believe. And for a long time past many of our churches and some of our ministers have expressed the confident opinion that this cause had become so woven into the affections of the pious portion of community, that even the services of an agent, for the collection of money, were no longer needed—that the field had only to be left without an agent, and the churches would, unsolicited, or having their attention called to the subject only by their Pastors, furnish for our Treasury a reasonable amount of funds. We have made the

trial. It is now nearly a year and a half since the Rev. Mr. Curry, the late Agent of the Parent Society on this field, left its service for another sphere of usefulness. The results of the first four or five months of trial were told at our last anniversary. During the first six months next succeeding our last annual meeting, the whole income of this Society was less than one hundred dollars; and not less than one half of this is to be credited to the direct efforts of the Secretary.

This neglect of the wants of the Society, by ministers and churches, was not because they did not know that they were left to do the work themselves. Of this fact they were duly apprised; and two large and respectable Presbyteries, embracing within their bounds more than one third part of the Territory of the Reserve, and an equal proportion of its wealth, had taken seasonable measures, as Presbyteries, to attend to collections for this object. They embraced too the very churches in which collections should have been made during the first four months of the financial year. Collections have subsequently been made in five of the churches belonging to one of these Presbyteries, but in only one belonging to the other. In another Presbytery only one church has contributed to our funds during the year, and in that the collection was made by the Secretary of the Society. We hope that this experience may not be lost. It should exist in the memory of the churches and of the ministry for a long time to come.

At the close of the above named period our Treasury was empty, and our existing liabilities had increased to more than six hundred dollars. Under these circumstances the Directors of the Society felt that the cause ought not to be permitted longer to suffer the results of this experiment; and the Secretary was requested to visit, so far as other duties might permit, those churches in which the remainder of the year would be the appropriate time for making collections for this object.

Although the prospects of the Society were thus dark during the first half of the year, yet, by the special blessing of God, we are now permitted to report an income during the year of \$944,94 in available funds. At the commencement of the year there was in the Treasury \$130,67, making the total available resources of the Society 1075,61. Its expenditures during the same period have been \$981,39, leaving a balance in the Treasury of only \$94,22, while our liabilities to Missionaries already under appointment is \$813,50; a portion of which is now due.

We are also permitted to report a further income, in notes and other property not at present available, of \$664,73. Of this sum

\$500, is a donation from Capt. Heman Oviatt, of Richfield, who has long been known as a warm friend of the Home Missionary cause.

The whole amount of receipts above named is \$1609,87, which, small as it is in comparison with our wants, or the ability and obligations of the churches, is an advance of considerably more than an hundred per cent upon the receipts of the preceding year. There have also been received articles of clothing &c. valued at \$64,42, the most of which, according to the design of the Donors, have been disposed of gratuitously.

The number of Missionaries who have been in commission in this field during the past year, by this, and the Parent Society, is 27. Of these only 14 have been sustained by us: the other 13 have drawn their appropriations directly from the Parent Board.

In transacting the business entrusted to us, we have kept on mind the wants of the whole wide field of Domestic Missionary enterprise: nor could we but watch, with an anxious eye, the progress of the cause through our land. The more we contemplate the condition of our country, and the wants of the world, the more deeply do we feel that the first duty of the American people, is to provide for the wants of our own destitute population. And few persons are yet at all aware of the great importance of this wide and fertile western valley; which is, or ought to be, for years to come, the great field of our Home Missionary operations. It is yet to exert a mighty influence in the world for either good or evil. Within 30 years past its western frontier settlements have advanced more than 1000 miles towards the setting sun; and its population has increased not less than seven fold. At the lowest estimate it will amount to 50 millions before the close of the present century. This is indeed allowing it but the same ratio of increase that the whole United States have experienced for 150 years past. As we have contemplated this field in its rising greatness, and its importance to our nation and to the world—as we have looked abroad upon its vast extent, its fertile soil, its rising cities, its multitudes of immigrants, flowing into it by millions from every part of our nation and from foreign lands, and its consequent rapidly increasing power to either bless or curse the nation and the world with its influence, we have felt a deep solicitude to know what the end of these things shall be. We have felt a strong conviction that the present generation of youth; yea, that we ourselves, shall, some of us, yet behold, here at the West, such scenes of joy or of sorrow as are not recorded in the whole history of the world down to the present time. If evangelical piety shall prevail, causing the millions of the West, and their wealth and influence to be consecrated to the ser-

vice of God, preserving the liberties of our nation, and fostering with devout care our religious institutions, then will this American Republic—this christian nation, throughout all its borders, shine forth with beams of glory which none of the nations of the earth can fail to behold. And ere the half century shall have rolled away, her sons and her daughters and her wealth, will have done much, very much to extend her religion and the benign influence of her institutions to every foreign benighted land. This devoutly to be wished for consummation of a nation's highest glory and highest usefulness to the world, it is yet in the power of the American people fully to realize. If the American churches will but arise and do their duty, in attending, as they ought, to their own destitute population, it will be realized. And before 50 years shall have passed away, 50 millions of enlightened christians, in this broad and fertile western valley, shall be the stability and the safety of our nation—shall secure to our children and to our children's children, the richest possible earthly inheritance, and by their example and by their works shall bless the world. But when we consider the danger arising to this land from the very circumstance of its rapid increase of population, drawn together as it is from different parts of the world, and having no common bond of either religious or political union—when we contemplate the wide desolations of the West, among which we are told, on the authority of the American Tract Society, of a field 100 miles broad by 500 long, and already containing half a million of inhabitants, in which there is not known to be a single educated minister of any denomination—and when we add to these facts the thought that two Roman Catholic institutions of Europe, are expending to build up their cause in these United States, more than 400,000 dollars a year, we exceedingly fear for the result. We fear that the day of our country's salvation will be past forever, before our churches will awake to behold their danger and to do their duty.

To meet the exigencies of the present time the Parent Society have felt solemnly called upon in the providence of God, and by the greatness of the trust committed to them, to enlarge their operations in this western field to the utmost practicable extent. Since the anniversary of the Society in May last, 38 missionaries who have never before been employed by the Society, and most of them young men direct from the Theological Seminaries, have been commissioned to labor in it, all of whom are expected to be on the ground by the first of October.

But what are 38 missionaries among the thousands of destitute churches and appropriate missionary districts of the West? Our

wants are far from being supplied by these. It will require at least twice this number to supply, even for the present year, merely the increase of population in these Western States with only one minister to every 10,000 souls. To supply the wants of our western churches, we shall, for years to come, need an annual increase of ministers from the east, not by tens only but by hundreds.

And it remains with the churches to say whether this supply shall be furnished. Many applications for appointment are now before the Parent Society, from ministers at the east, whose hearts are already amid the wide desolations of the West; and the Committee are only deferring their appointment until they shall know what response the churches will give to their appeal for an increase of funds.

Under these circumstances we most affectionately and seriously invite both ministers and churches, and all who care for the well being of our country, or the salvation of souls, or the glory of God, to come forward to the aid of this cause with more promptness and efficiency. We are deeply impressed with the fact that now is the day of our country's salvation. And may God grant that we may all know before it shall be past and gone, the things which belong to our country's peace.

By order of the Board of Directors.

MYRON TRACY, *Secretary.*

Sept. 23, 1843.

T. P. HANDY, *Treasurer, in account with the WESTERN RESERVE DOMESTIC MISSIONARY SOCIETY.*

Dr.

To balance in Treasury by last report,	-	-	\$130 67
Collections received by the Secretary,	-	-	759 94
do received by the Treasurer,	-	-	185

\$1075 61

Society holds notes of Rev. H. Blodgette \$150, and interest now due, and not included in the funds on hand.

Cr.

By orders paid Missionaries,	-	-	\$636 83
Paid Secretary for services,	-	-	300 00
do Traveling expenses, freight, and postages to do	-	-	44 56
*Balance in the Treasury,	-	-	94 22

\$1075 61

T. P. HANDY, *Treasurer.*

Cleveland, Sept. 23, 1843.

*Of this sum, \$43, is in a note given by Western Reserve College March 28, 1842 and received by the former Agent as cash.

OFFICERS OF THE WESTERN RESERVE DOMESTIC
MISSIONARY SOCIETY. ELECTED SEPT. 25, 1843.

REV. MYRON TRACY, Hudson, *Secretary*.

T. P. HANDY, Cleveland, *Treasurer*.

P. M. WEDDELL, " *Auditor*.

DIRECTORS.

REV. S. C. AIKIN, D. D., Cleveland.

DEA. S. C. WHITAKER, "

A. D. CUTTER, "

BUCKLEY STEDMAN, "

REV. JOHN SEWARD, Aurora.

" D. W. LATHROP, Elyria.

" D. C. BLOOD, Strongsville.

" S. B. CANFIELD, Ohio City.

" ALVAN NASH, Chester.

" ELDAD BARBER, Florence.

" B. C. BALDWIN, Medina.

" N. B. PURINTON, Warren.

The next annual meeting of the Society will be holden in Painesville on the evening of the Friday next succeeding the third Thursday in September, 1844.

