

ADDRESS ON THE DUTY OF PERSONAL ENGAGEMENT
IN THE WORK OF MISSIONS
JOHN URQUHART, 1825

I AM tired of arguing with the opponents of the missionary cause. It is my intention this evening to address myself to those who profess to be its friends.

I can easily conceive a mind so biased by prejudice as to take a distorted view of every argument that can be adduced on this, or indeed on any other subject whatever; or a mind moving in such a sphere as never to have had these arguments fairly presented to it; and, therefore, I am by no means disposed to speak roundly of all who refuse to lend their aid to missionary societies in a tone of unequivocal condemnation. But I do confess I cannot imagine a mind which has deliberately weighed the arguments, and candidly considered the facts of this important subject, still refusing to embark its energies or its influence in some way or other, in the work of evangelising the nations of the earth. Indeed, the cause of missions has already met with such able defence, and the arguments of its opponents have been so often refuted, that they themselves seem to be almost sick of the very sound of their oft-repeated objections. And more than this, as if to show that the subject is quite impregnable, even at those points which the adversaries have never assailed, the advocates for the *promulgation* of Christianity, like the advocates for the *truth* of Christianity before them, have even brought forward fictitious objections of their own inventions, in order to demonstrate with that perfect ease such objections could have been met, had their adversaries of the cause adduced them. And truly, after the champions of the missionary cause have done their part so well, it seems altogether needless

still to keep up the debate with those who seem determined to resist the appeals of the most cogent reasoning, and even to set at nought the authority of human testimony. For of those who persist in denying the efficacy of missionary exertion, it may in truth be said that they “will not believe the great work which the Lord is working in these days, even though a man declare it unto them.” Surely, then, we cannot justly be charged with a want of charity, when thus compelled to the belief that, after all, this pretended opposition of judgment on the part of our adversaries is nothing but a screen for the coldness and indifference of their hearts.

I turn, therefore, altogether at present from those who oppose these exertions of Christian philanthropy, and address myself to the friends of missions. I address myself to you, who, by being the members of a missionary society, profess yourselves the advocates and supporters of this benevolent scheme; and more especially to those of you who, by entering on a course of study preparatory to the duties of the Christian ministry, have thereby professed to devote yourselves unreservedly to the service of God in the gospel of his Son.

And I do not address you, my friends, for the purpose of again repeating those unmeaning compliments that are wont to be presented to the subscribers and office-bearers of missionary societies at such meetings as the present. I do fear that there is too much of the tone of this world’s flattering adulation in the public language of our missionary assemblies. The doctrine of this essay may be unpalatable, but I believe it to be true, that the members of missionary associations have absolutely done nothing, when we consider the high demands of a cause whose object is the spiritual and moral renovation of a world. Neither do I address you for the purpose of picturing forth in the colouring of romance

the high devotedness of missionary character and lofty achievements of the missionary life. This has often been done already; but like most other poetic descriptions, while it has excited the imagination, it has failed to influence the conduct. It may have caused him who listened to indulge in some fairy dream of exile and martyrdom for the sake of his religion and his Saviour, while all the while it is quite possible that not only he, but even the very person who drew the splendid picture, may have remained altogether unimpressed with the sober convictions of a duty his imagination had set forth in such glowing characters. In reality this has been the case. One cannot help wondering, that of the many who have pleaded so earnestly for the cause of missions, and have declaimed so eloquently concerning the high dignity of the missionary enterprise, so few have been found who were willing to go forth to the combat. It seems to me that while the enemies of missions have altogether despised and vilified the missionary office, the advocates of missions have erred in the other extreme, by regarding it with somewhat of a sentimental admiration, and by describing it rather as a work of supererogation than of duty.

We have been too much accustomed to regard the missionary life as an undertaking of most extraordinary magnitude, and as reserved for a few of the most daring and devoted spirits in the race of living Christians; and thus we easily succeed in pushing from ourselves the duty of personal engagement. But we should do well to view the matter apart from this borrowed splendor, which by its glare obscures rather than brightens the object of our contemplation. After all, the greater part of the work must be accomplished by ordinary men. And I am persuaded, if we but take a candid and sober view of the case, we shall begin to suspect that the matter *may* come home in the shape of duty, even to

ourselves. Great as are the sacrifices the missionary makes, they are but small when we take into account those sublime truths which we believe as well as he. And it is of the very deepest importance that we should bear in mind that those very sacrifices are represented in the Bible, not as the fruits of an overreaching faith which may fall to the lot of but here and there a mind of apostolic endowment, but as the test of simple discipleship itself. "If any man come to me, and hate not his father and mother, and wife and children, and brethren and sisters yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." If by these, and the remarks that follow, I can impress the mind of any one of you with the duty of engaging in this great undertaking, let me warn such an individual of the delusion of putting such convictions away from him on the ground that this is a work far too high for him to engage in; or under the deceitful impression that his shrinking from such an enterprise is a sign merely that his faith is weak, and has not yet acquired sufficient strength to warrant his engaging in a work of such difficulty and self-denial. If the words of Christ be true which I have just repeated, to shrink from duty, even in the face of all the trials that present themselves in the contemplation of the missionary life, does not argue a weakness of faith merely, but a want of faith. The man who is not ready to part with country, and even life itself, at the bidding of his Saviour, is not worthy of the name of a disciple.

Now, were it not that the minds of all of us in regard to this subject are under the influence of most overpowering and bewildering prejudices, I am sure I should only have to lay before you the present state of missionary operations in order to convince you of the duty of taking the question into most serious consideration, whether you may not be called to engage in this work of

evangelising the heathen. You give your assent to the duty of sending the gospel to pagan countries, and by your subscriptions you profess yourselves willing to cooperate in the accomplishment of this grand object. And so far you have done well. You may have thought you were doing all that was in your power for the furtherance of the great design, and you may never once have suspected that there was any call for greater services on your part. But if I can convince you that there is such a call, then, on the simple score of consistency, you are bound to listen to it and to obey it. For if this matter demands our attention at all, it demands our deepest attention; if it has a right to our services at all, it has a right to our most devoted services. If you are not prepared to make greater sacrifices in this cause than you have ever yet done, when manifestly called to do so, then the little you have done will only serve most clearly to condemn you. Others, who deny the importance or disbelieve the efficacy of the missionary project, may have some plausible excuse for standing aloof; they are at least consistent with their own profession. But assuredly it does convict us of singular hard-heartedness towards our fellow-men, if our zeal for their conversion can carry us the length of giving up a few paltry shillings, which were not surrendered it may be at the expense of a single comfort, and our zeal can carry us no further. We might pardon, though we could not defend, the incredulity of the individual who would not believe that some family near was in a state of starvation, but we should utterly detest the sordid avarice and unfeeling apathy of the man who by giving something should just show us that he gave credit to the tale of suffering, and who yet, by the worthlessness of the trifle which he gave, should let us see that the wretchedness of his neighbor had made no suitable impression on his heart.

Now, I say there is a call for much more devoted services on your part than you have ever yet rendered in the work of evangelising the nations. If we are disposed to estimate the prosperity of the missionary cause from the sums that are annually poured into its coffers, we should indeed augur well of its success. But you are aware that after all *money* is but a subordinate part of the apparatus. It may be the mainspring of the machine, but it is not the machine itself. The agents who go forth to the work are the effective part of the mechanism. And what avails it that we have obtained a good moving power if there be no machine to set it in motion? A goodwill to the cause of missions has been on the increase, but there is every reason to fear that the spirit of missionary zeal is on the decline. It has grown more fashionable of late to subscribe to missionary societies; in consequence of this the revenues of the different societies have been so increased as would enable them to extend their plans, could they but find a sufficient number of zealous and devoted agents. But such is the languishing state of missionary zeal, so little is there of what Horne would call "a passion for missions," that it is with considerable difficulty the present stations can be supplied; and in such circumstances it is altogether vain to talk of extending the plan of missionary operations.

When first the proposal was made to send the heralds of salvation to the ends of the earth, the Christian world received the proposal with eagerness and joy. A splendid equipment was fitted out, and many were desirous of sharing the honours of victory that was so confidently and ardently anticipated. But the novelty of the missionary enterprise is gone; and it would seem that the spirit of undaunted chivalry which a scheme of such lofty sublimity and such disinterested benevolence at first excited, has languished and well-nigh expired

under the heavy pressure of those difficulties and discouragements which an actual experiment has brought to light.

The Scottish Missionary Society is in want of labourers; the London Missionary Society is in want of labourers; the Church Missionary Society (to the shame of the Churchmen of England be it told) have for some time been compelled to gather the missionaries whom they send for from the other countries of Europe. And, to sum up all, even among the Moravians themselves, so famed for the devotedness of their missionary zeal, that spirit of other days which could brook slavery and death for the sake of Jesus would seem to have died away. Of them it once could be said, that no sooner was a missionary station vacant than there was an eager competition who should have the honour to supply it; for then it was counted an honour, for the love they bore to Christ, to succeed to a dreary station, amid eternal snows, or to fill the places of those who had fallen by the murderous hand of the savages for whose sakes they had left their country and their home. But now there is a difficulty in finding persons willing to go even to stations of ordinary comfort and ease. In this state of matters, what avails the increase of missionary funds? Do you not feel that there is a loud call for something more than mere subscriptions? And to whom can this appeal be made but to the members of missionary associations? And on whom can it be urged home more forcibly than those who have professed to surrender the whole energies of their minds and their bodies to the promulgation of the religion of Christ?

This is a statement of facts, and such a statement, I am sure, would be quite sufficient to call forth the willing offer of his services from any one who believes in the efficacy of missionary exertion, and who is not tied down by some peculiar

circumstances to his native land, were it not that the mind is driven from its convictions of duty by prejudices and affections the strongest that can influence our nature — and I will even say, the purest that can oppose the will of God. Accordingly, I have found in my own experience, that even those who are most liberal in their donations to missionary societies, and most active in spreading among their friends a spirit of goodwill to this work of Christian philanthropy, immediately abate their ardour and turn upon another tack so soon as the duty of personal engagement is pressed home upon themselves, or even upon any of their near relations. Those who are most strenuous in their arguments for the general cause of missions instantly start objections to the proposal of themselves becoming missionaries. A thousand plausible arguments immediately present themselves — our own country has much higher claims upon us; all are not yet converted here. Besides, the success of missionaries has not been very great, and we think we can do more good by remaining at home. Such arguments, when in the mouth of an opponent to the general cause of missions, none so forward to answer or so eloquent in refuting as they, and yet to the very same refuges so they betake themselves when we merely carry out a little further, and make a new application of their own previous assertions.

Nor do I at all wonder at this, though I cannot apologise for it. The ties which bind us to our country and our home cannot be so easily broken. The love which we bear to parents and sisters and brothers, and a whole circle of affectionate friends, is perhaps the strongest passion that has its seat in the human breast; and Christianity, far from impairing, refines and strengthens the attachment. The land which gave us birth, and where our fathers lived before us, and the companions of our youth, and the affectionate guardians of our tender

infancy, are objects which, most of earthly things, deserve our love. There is but one, and only *one Being* in the universe, whom we are commanded to love with a stronger affection. It is little wonder, then, that when feelings like these — so strong that no time or distance can ever efface their influence; and so pure, that piety itself imparts to them a tone of deeper tenderness — that when feelings like this exert an opposing influence, even the most devoted Christian should be startled at the first proposal of a duty which speaks destruction to them all.

It is on this account that I feel the statement of facts I have laid before you may not be sufficient to call forth your services to the work which loudly calls for them, and in which you profess to take an interest. It is only on this account that I feel that the statement I have made needs to be enforced by arguments. For I believe that to a mind which could take an unprejudiced view of the matter, no reasoning would be required to convince him of the urgency of the appeal, and no argument, however strong, could add to the force of the simple statement.

I feel, however, that it is necessary to reason with you. And the main argument on which I would insist is founded on the commandment of our Saviour: “Go ye and teach all nations.” This has often been repeated by the advocates of missionary exertion; and though it may thereby have lost something of its freshness, it has yet lost nothing of its force. I consider it still the stronghold of the missionary cause. But I am inclined to take a more extended view of the precept. Not only do I look upon this little verse as the great foundation on which all arguments for missions must be received, but as the only scriptural authority which we can have for preaching the gospel at all. I can conceive many other inducements which lead men in our own land to profess or

pretend to be ministers of God. But I believe that every truly Christian minister in the land must rest with the whole authority of his commission on this and similar commandments. Now you must all perceive the bearing of this argument. It places our own country exactly on the same footing with the other nations of the earth, and it makes the work of the missionary abroad and the minister at home one and the same work. *The work is in the field*, and the preaching of the gospel is the work to be accomplished. And it is only in as far as Great Britain is one of the "*all nations*" specified in the terms of the commission, that we have any warrant from Scripture to preach the gospel here. Grant me but this view of the subject and the question comes home with irresistible force. How comes it that all the labourers should have contrived to cluster together in one tiny corner of the vineyard? What special order has been given by the Lord about this little island on which we dwell? Or, in what does the vast superiority of its claims consist? It is nothing to my argument that in this country an ecclesiastical establishment has poured forth its benefices over the land, and has connected with the profession of the Christian ministry the comforts of civilized life and the enjoyments of a refined society, or the opportunities of literary and scientific retirement. With the hirelings that have crept into the Church at present I have nothing to do. Neither is it anything to me that numerous sectaries with which some of us may be connected have spread themselves over the land, and are struggling for the superiority. I have no sympathy with the outcry that is made by each rival party about the interests of *their cause*. I know of no cause that demands the homage of our hearts and services but the cause of Christ. Now, strip our country of these, and other accessory distinctions, which I think all of you will admit should have no control in giving it a higher claim upon our

Christian services, and then tell me wherein it differs from other lands, in as far as the scriptural argument for the preaching of the gospel is concerned.

I am persuaded, that with all our knowledge of geography, we are accustomed, from irresistible prejudices, to rate the extent and importance of our own country much too high. Now, in order to dissipate this delusion, let us try if we can take a reduced sketch of the world, diminishing everything proportionally, just as a land-surveyor finds it convenient to draw upon paper a reduced representation of the estate which he has been measuring.

Let us imagine, that instead of the world, a single country had been pointed out by our Lord as the field of action. And since we are most familiar with our own land, let us just suppose that the particular country specified was the island of Great Britain; and that, instead of the command to go forth into all nations, and preach the gospel to every creature, the order had been to go throughout all counties of this island, and preach the gospel to every inhabitant. I find, that on a scale which would make the population of Great Britain represent that of the world, the population of such a county as Mid-Lothian might be taken as a sufficiently accurate representation of the population of our own land.

In order, then, to have a just picture of the present state of the world, only conceive that all who had received the above commission somehow or other had contrived to gather themselves together within the limits of this single county. Imagine to yourselves all the other divisions of Scotland and England immersed in heathen darkness, and that by these Christians who had so unaccountably happened to settle down together in one little spot, no effort was made to evangelize the rest of the land, except by collecting a little money, and sending

forth two or three itinerants to walk single-handedly through the length and breadth of the country.

I shall be told, however, that illustration is not argument; and so distorted to think this a perfect caricature of the matter. But I deny that this is an illustration at all. It is merely a representation on a reduced scale; and I believe you will find it to be a correct representation of the state of the world. It is no argument against the conclusions of the practical mathematician, that his calculations have had to do, not with the very objects or doctrines themselves about which he determines, but with proportional representations of them which he has delineated. The very same thing holds here. And if you but grant the correctness of my representation, then the deductions made from it are every whit as conclusive as if our minds could so expand as to do away with the necessity of the representation, and could gather their conclusions with as much ease from the consideration of the objects themselves about which we reason.

You will permit me, therefore, to argue from the representation a little further.

Were I to ask you what, in the case we supposed, you would imagine to be the duty of the ministers who had clustered within the limits of a single county, when their commission embraced every county in the land; you would at once reply, that they ought to spread themselves over the face of the country, till every corner of the field shared equally in the benefit of their ministrations. Now I am almost afraid to transfer this question from the representation to the actual case before us. Not that but I believe I might most legitimately do so, but because I feel that I cannot carry along with me the sympathies of the Christian world. In fact, I am arguing at present for a much humbler effort than the fair answer to

such a question would land us in. To return to our ideal field of operation: let us suppose that even the little band of itinerants began to fail, and a difficulty was found to recruit their numbers. Let us suppose that the funds collected were more than sufficient to send forth more, if any would but be found who were willing to go. Let us try if we can fancy anything in the shape of an excuse which our professed evangelists could allege for still refusing to quit the little territory to which they had all along so pertinaciously adhered. Some might say they did not think it was the proper time to go forth. You might meet them with the unlimited command of their Master, and especially His promise to be *always* with them in the work to which the commandment called them. Others might say they did not think those who had gone forth already had taken the right plan, and might even urge in support of this that actually the two or three preachers who had been sent forth had not yet converted the country. The direct reply to such would be: The error of another is no apology for your disobedience. It is only a louder call to you to fulfill the command of your Lord, by some plan which will be more agreeable to His will. Such excuses might be framed by those who had never cooperated in the little effort that had been made. But can you conceive that those who had given their entire consent to the plan itself, and had been zealous in sending forth others, could have any imaginable excuse for shrinking back when their personal services were called for? Let us try if we can invent any. They might tell us there were yet many within the little sphere they had allotted to themselves who were yet unconverted. They might bear witness to their own negligence, by telling us that actually there were still some within their own sphere of action to whom the message they had received from the Lord had never been fairly delivered. They might express their apprehension

that if they began to go forth over the face of the country, the little spot which they had hitherto cultivated with so much care might hereafter be overlooked in the wide field which lay before them, and come to be altogether neglected. And some might even have the effrontery to tell us that they quite felt the urgency of the call to go forth over the face of the country; but for their part they had rather stay at home and persuade others to go.

You feel that there is something ludicrous in the very description. There is such an utter discrepancy between the command and the professed obedience to it; between the work to be performed and the scantiness of the means that are expected to accomplish it; between the obvious call of duty and the frivolous excuses by which they are evaded. Now, would were but an imaginary picture; but it must recommend itself to all of you as too true a representation of the present state of the world, and the kind of obedience which the disciples of Christ render to their Lord and Saviour.

I have thus tried to set before you, and illustrate my main argument, that the world is one field, and consequently that every minister of Christ should be ready to go to that part of the field, wherever it be, which stands most in need of his services. You must perceive that we have taken it upon ourselves to circumscribe most unwarrantably the limits of our commission; and that in these days nothing adequate to the fulfilment of our Lord's command has so much as been attempted. I have pressed upon you the loud demand that there is at present for labourers, in order to maintain even the comparatively feeble effort which the Christian world has of late put forth; and you perceive that the objections to this appeal just hinted at appear sufficiently frivolous. I am aware, however, that on these or similar objection the whole force of your refusal to

obey this call must rest, and therefore I feel it necessary to take each of them singly into more serious consideration.

I shall say nothing concerning the argument that the heathen are not in a fit state for receiving the gospel, and other similar objections. These are adduced only by the opponents of missionary societies. I take it for granted at present that I am addressing those who give their full assent to the duty of sending the gospel to the heathen, and who give their decided approbation to the plans that are in operation for the accomplishment of this grand object. The arguments which I mean to consider at present are those which are urged by the supporters of missionary operations when a demand is made for their own personal services. Among the most prominent of these is the assertion that all are not yet converted in our own land, and therefore our own country has the first claim upon our regard. The terms of the argument are very true, but the conclusion drawn from it I believe to be false. It is a lamentable fact that so many in our own land are not under the power of the gospel. But why? In by far the greater number of instances because they will not come unto Christ that they may have life. Have they not had the message of mercy proclaimed to them, and what more can the messenger do? Have they not been plied, Sabbath after Sabbath, with the call to repent and believe the gospel, and if they still remain impenitent, what more can man accomplish? Can we hope to do more than apostles with all their miraculous powers and their unwavering faith could effect? When the gospel was declared by these extraordinary men who had trod this earth in the company of their incarnate God, and who, after He left them, were visited with the supernatural endowments of His Spirit—the account of their success is that “some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not.” And as

long as the Scripture doctrine of election holds true, it will still be found, wherever this gospel is proclaimed, that some will receive the message and some will most obstinately reject it. Far be it from me to adduce the doctrine of election as a reason why we should ever cease to ply with all our earnestness, and admonish with all our tenderness, the most hardened unbeliever or the veriest scoffer at sacred things. But I am quite warranted in adducing it, in order to show the fallacy of the expectation that we shall ever be able by any concentration of our energies to any sphere, however narrow, to convert *all* who dwell within these limits to the truth of the gospel. We do well to consider whether by such expectations we be not opposing the purposes of God. He has given us no reason to indulge the hope that He will choose His people exclusively from our nation, although that nation has been favoured very highly. He has said that He will take one of a city and two of a family; and it is said of the redeemed in heaven, that they have been gathered “out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation.”

But it may be said that I am not giving a fair view of the case, for that very many in our own land have never had the message of mercy fairly proclaimed to them. This is too true, and a disgrace it is to the ministers, and even the private Christians of Britain. How easily might the numerous evangelical ministers of the land, or at least the evangelical ministers among the Dissenters who are hindered by no ecclesiastical authority from preaching the truth where they think it has not been fully declared—how easily, I say, might they dispel the ignorance that yet darkens the spiritual atmosphere of this enlightened country? But, after all, I do not feel the force of this claim when weighted against the claim of those who are literally perishing for lack of knowledge. I do believe that

every inhabitant of our land has heard so much as makes him utterly inexcusable if he be ignorant of the way of acceptance before God. If he sits under a minister who perverts or but imperfectly declares the Gospel, he has the standard of truth in his hand, and by the Bible he can and he ought to try the doctrine whether it be of God. If he have not a Bible himself, he has seen it in the possession of others, or at least he has heard that there is such a book, which many believe to be a revelation from Heaven. And finally, even in the haunts of the most abandoned depravity, where ignorance and wickedness may have spread a gloom as dismal as the darkness of paganism itself, even there the wretched inmates are still reminded of a God and a Saviour; if by nothing else, yet by the weekly return of an unusual stillness, and by the oft-repeated and well-known invitations of the Sabbath-bell. But when you urge as an excuse for remaining in this land, that some within its borders are yet ignorant of the terms of mercy, do you indeed mean to wander from parish to parish and illumine every dark corner on which the light of truth has not yet shone? Or will you venture, where none have dared to venture before you, within the receptacles of vice and infamy, to proclaim the tale of a Saviour's sufferings to those who may never have heard of His name? If you will not or cannot do these things, then this argument is no argument for you.

Closely connected with this objection, that all are not yet converted in our own land, there is the apprehension lest a spirit of missionary zeal should damp the spirit of exertion at home, and that our own country should suffer from our attention to foreign lands. The spirit which excites this apprehension for the eternal welfare of our countryman deserves the highest commendation. But depend upon it the fear is quite unfounded. I am quite willing to allow that our

kinsmen according to the flesh have the first claim upon our Christian sympathy. It is true that, as the messengers of Christ, and as far as the command of our Saviour is concerned, the world is all before us, and no country has any peculiar claim upon our regard. But as men who are linked to those around us by bonds so strong as those of relationship, and all the other connexions which form the cement of civil society, there is no doubt something very peculiar in the claims of our native land. To true patriotism I am willing to allow the eulogiums that poets and orators have heaped upon it. The love of our country is a very noble affection. But there is a thing which has been misnamed patriotism, which consists not so much in loving our own country, as in despising and disregarding every other. But surely it but ill accords with the liberal sentiment of the present age to despise any brother of the human family, because he has not sworn allegiance to the same sovereign with ourselves; or because, forsooth, he happens to be separated from us by some river and mountain, or imaginary political boundary. Time was in our own little country every petty chief was a monarch; and whatever may be the associations that romance has gathered around these olden times, every generous mind must look back with detestation and disgust on that narrow-minded spirit of clanship, which could tie down the affections of an individual to the few families that happened to bear the same name or to serve the same lord with himself, and which pronounced him the noblest of his clan who hated with the deadliest malice the whole world besides. But what is this pretended patriotism but the dross of this detestable spirit? We surely have not need to be told, in this age of enlightened liberality, that God has made of one blood all nations that are on the face of the earth. And if the spirit of the age cannot reclaim us, Christianity at least should reclaim us from such

bigoted narrowness. A spirit of true patriotism is in perfect harmony with a spirit of the most extended liberality. Your benevolence must overflow the narrow channel ere it can dilate itself over a wide surface. Just tell me of a man that he is a general philanthropist, and I can immediately conceive of that man that his family and social affections are stronger than those of other individuals. There may be exceptions to this rule, it is true, for it is quite possible to find monsters in the moral world as well as in the natural. All I assert is, that it is the general tendency of an extended benevolence to unite us in closer affection than ever to those objects which have a nearer relation to us. And, indeed, in the late extension of our Christian philanthropy to other lands, this principle has been most beautifully illustrated. Whence sprung our tract societies, our itinerant societies, and the other institutions that are now in operation for instructing the ignorant of our own land? They have all originated in the impulse that was given to Christian philanthropy by the formation of the Missionary Society. The stream of Christian benevolence, when it sought its way to the ends of the earth, first filled and overflowed the reservoir that had contained it. The very consideration of that case of those who were further removed from them made the Christians of our land take a deeper interest in the situation of those who were connected with them by stronger ties. It is on this account that I would have you to extend your views still further, till not only would I have you think of our country as a little spot, when compared with the world, that so you may feel the close relationship that exists between ourselves and our fellow countrymen; but I would have you think of this globe itself on which we dwell as but one among the myriads that travel with it in their mighty journeys through boundless immensity. And then will you begin to feel that whole human race

forms but one little family in the universe of God. We shall thus forget those small distinctions which the ambition and avarice of man have made upon the face of the globe. We shall feel ourselves to be denizens of this earth, and the inhabitants of the universe. We shall feel that we are united to our fellow-men by stronger ties than the indefinite relation which subsists among all the creatures of God. Are we not united by the ties of a common nature? Are we not involved in a common calamity, in that we have forfeited the favour of our God—a calamity which, for aught we know, may have happened to our race alone, of all the families of the universe? And is not a common pardon offered, and has not a common Saviour died for us all?

I have thus tried to answer the objections that spring from an overweening partiality to our own country and from the ignorance and unbelief that still exists there. But by far the most triumphant answer to all these arguments is founded on the authority of apostolic example. Paul had a much stronger attachment to his country than any modern patriot can boast. He wished himself even accursed from Christ for his brethren's sake, and yet he gloried in being the apostle to the Gentiles. But there were feelings stronger than patriotism that bound the early disciples to the land of their fathers, feelings which none but an Israelite could experience. Their country was the land favoured of Heaven. Their countrymen were the chosen people of God. And if any may urge as an excuse for lingering in the land of their nativity that all their countrymen had not yet embraced the Gospel, assuredly the apostles and early evangelists might have used this plea. But far different was their conduct. They thought it enough to have fairly offered the terms of mercy to their countrymen, and when some rejected the message which they delivered, so far from thinking this a reason

why they should still remain, they considered it as the very signal for their departure. They thought that those who had never had the offer of God's favour had now a prior claim upon their regard, and they addressed their countrymen in such language as the following: "It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you; but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles."

There is still one other argument, perhaps the most plausible of all, against engaging in the work of missions, and to which I beg very briefly to advert. It is, that in the present state of matters we can do more good at home than abroad. A minister in this country, it is said, may make as many, and sometimes more, converts than the missionary in the heathen country. And the question is triumphantly put, whether the soul that is converted at the distance of some thousand miles from our land be more precious than the soul which is converted in our own neighborhood; and whether it be not a matter of as great thankfulness and joy that a soul has been delivered from a state of self-delusion, though living in a country called Christian, as that a heathen has been turned from idols to serve the living God. The argument has a great semblance of fairness, but I think we shall find it to be unsound.

In the *first* place, it is not true that in general the success of ministers at home is greater than that of those who labour in heathen lands. And, *secondly*, though it be allowed that the conversion of a soul is not more acceptable to God because of the place where the conversion is wrought, yet there is much in the case of those who first turn to the Lord from a nation of idolaters, that may well fill our hearts with unusual joy and thankfulness, inasmuch as these are the *first fruits* of a hitherto uncultivated field, and may be regarded as the earnest of an

abundant harvest. In the same manner, you can easily conceive how a few grains of wheat, though comparatively little worth in a cultivated country, might acquire an immense value in a new colony, where no other seed could be obtained. Besides, there is much preparing the way. We are not to suppose that the conversion of a world is to be the work of one generation. The ground must be cleared ere we can so much as sow the seed, and this must be a season of toil and difficulty and discouragement.

You will perceive the fallacy of the objection now under consideration, in almost any case but the one before us. Let us suppose an accommodation of our Saviour's parable of the vineyard to the present circumstances of the world. Imagine to yourselves all the husbandmen to have settled down in one little fertile corner of the vineyard, and to have left all the rest with the soil unbroken, covered with briars and thorns, and trodden down by the beasts of the forest. When called to account for their negligence, you may conceive them to answer: "Our fathers have planted vines and they have yielded fruit luxuriantly, and we truly thought that we were acting best for your advantage in choosing that spot for our labours where the fruit was most abundant." Who would not see in such a case that their own ease had been consulted and not their master's interest? And who could help the suspicion, that they wanted the press into their own cup of the overflowing vintage?

I have thus tried to set before you the present state of the missionary cause, and the loud call which there is for efficient labourers. I have stated to you the great argument, that the world is one field, and that our Saviour's command is not fulfilled so long as the distribution of His ministers over this field is so very

unequal. And finally, I have tried to answer some of the objections that are made to personal engagement in the work.

The matter some time ago presented itself very forcibly to my own mind, and I felt that it at least demanded my serious consideration. As I have proceeded with my inquiries on the subject, the difficulties seem to have gathered thicker on the prospect, but the convictions of duty have grown stronger too. The arguments for personal engagement seem to me to have acquired the strength of a demonstration. I have therefore resolved, with the help of God, to devote my life to the cause; and I have only solemnly to charge every one of you who are looking forward to the ministry of Christ to take this matter into most serious consideration.

Some of you may think that I have not satisfactorily answered the objections which may be urged against personally engaging the work, and other objections may possibly present themselves to some of you. But I ask you seriously to examine whether there do not lurk under these objections a want of devotedness to God and a secret love of the world. Why is it that there is an eager competition for the ministerial office in our own land, where a comfortable salary is annexed to the preaching of the Gospel? And why is it that the love of country can be overcome whenever any worldly advantage is to be gained? But when the Gospel is to be preached where there is no reward but winning souls to Christ, and no honour but the honour that cometh from God, there alone the ranks of the labourers are thin, and their deficiencies can with difficulty be supplied. I mean no uncharitable insinuations respecting your motives, but I ask you, if too much reason has not been given for the outcry that has been made against priestcraft by the worldling or the infidel!

Do not think I wish to press you into this service. It is a maxim which much experience has taught the Moravians, never to persuade any man to become a missionary. I have laid the matter before you, and I leave it with your own conscience, as you soon must answer before God.

I have the happiness to mention to you that your respected secretary of last year has given himself to the work, and I know there are some present who have felt the urgency of the call.

I am not without hope, that even from this unnoticed association a little band of devoted labourers may be raised up, who shall carry the name of their Saviour to the ends of the earth, and shall meet in another world to receive that high reward which is reserved for those who have left father and mother, sister and brother, and houses and lands for Christ's sake and the Gospel's.