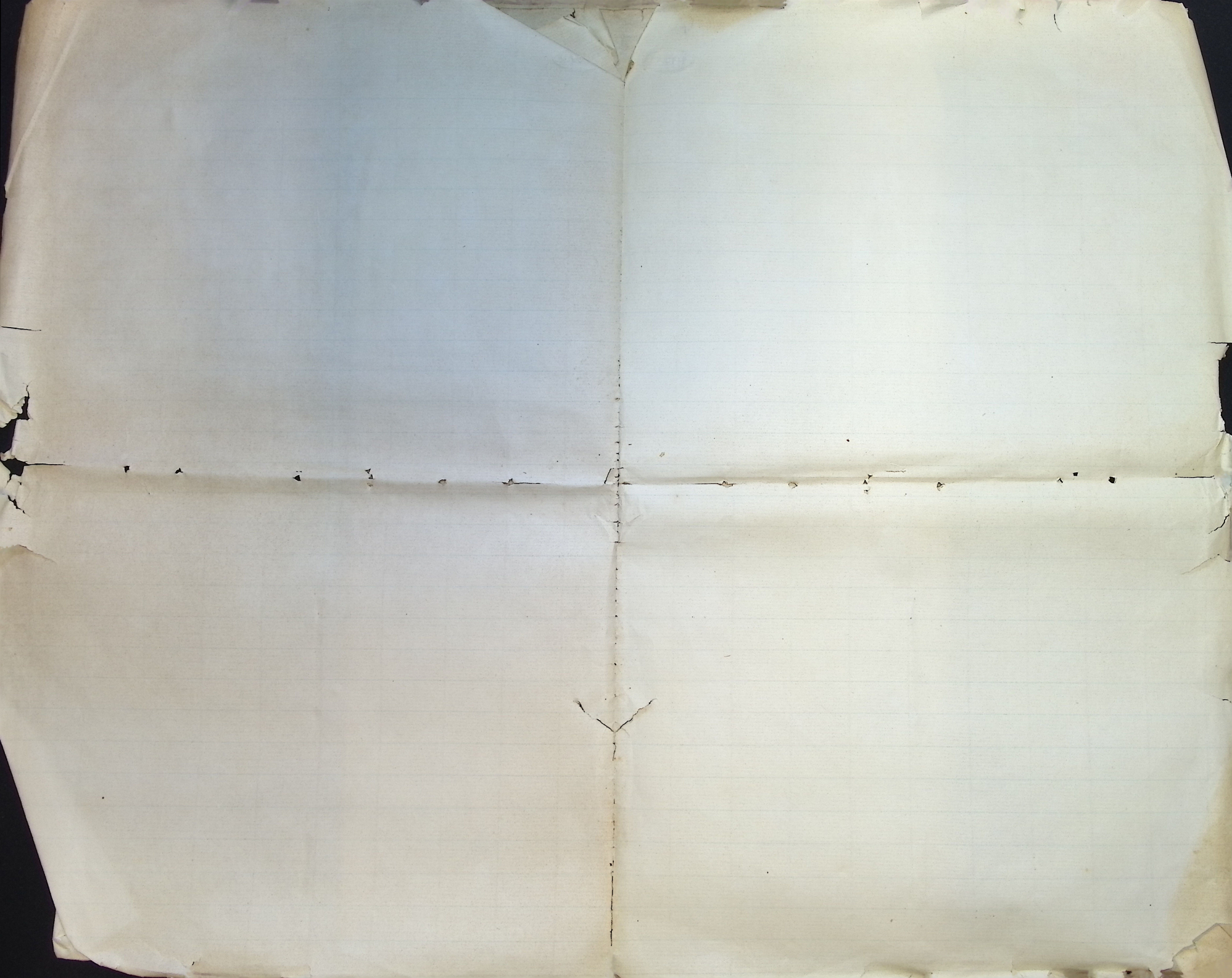
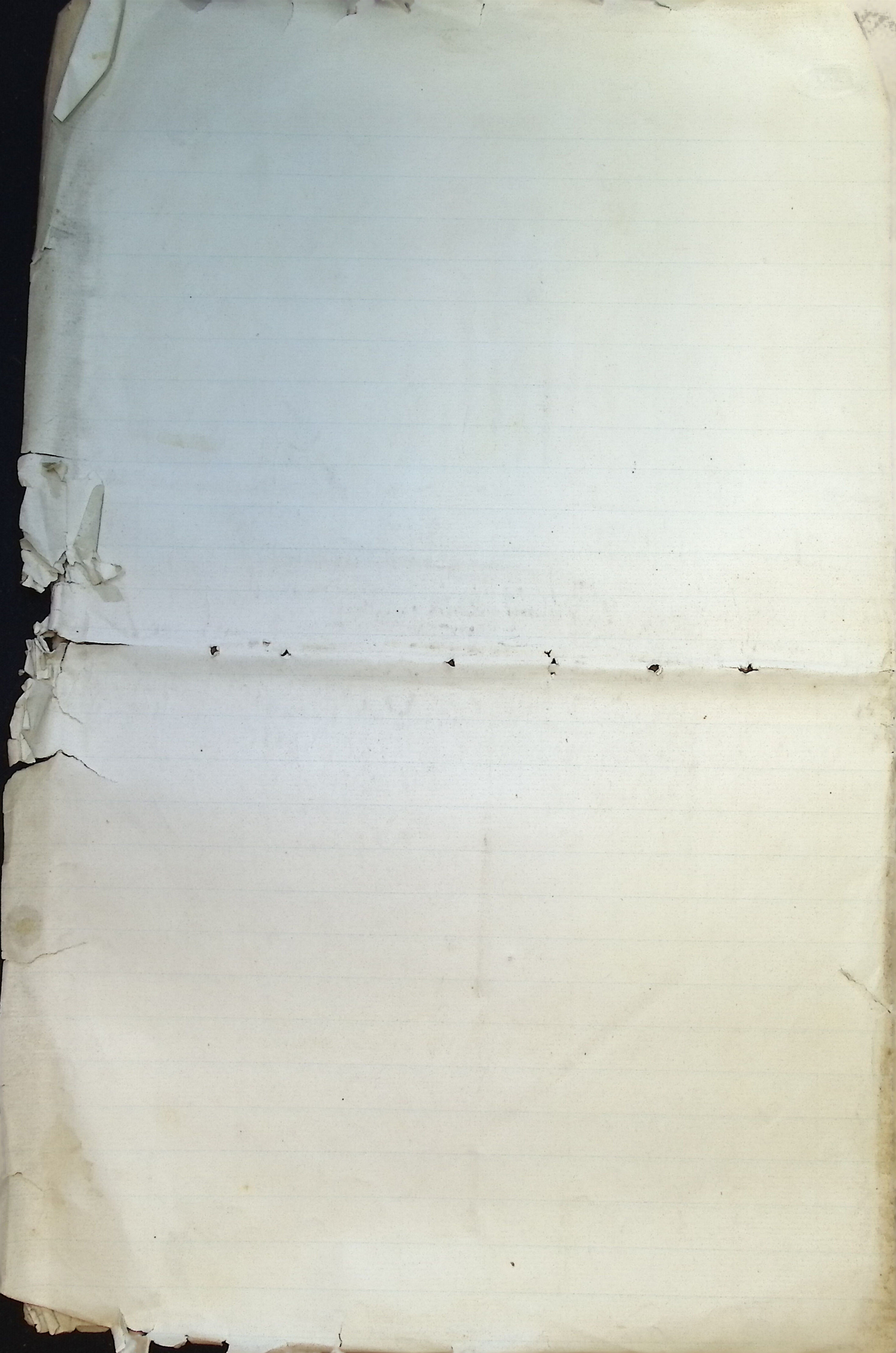


Deputation

William W. Brown





Rev. P. H. Evans

Boston

Letters
on the

Maps

Management of Missions,
addressed to

The Rev. Solomon Pickens, D.D.

Secretary of the American Baptist Missionary Union

By Nathaniel Brown.

American Baptist Missionary Union

Not when Peter was come to Antioch, I understand him to be you, because he was to be blind. Gal. 1:10

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LETTER I.

REV. AND DEAR SIR:—Recent events have produced in my mind the conviction, that the management of Missions is a subject which demands a more full and unfettered examination than it has hitherto received. It is with considerable reluctance that I have decided on laying before the public my views in regard to the practical results and tendencies of the present system. This I propose to do in a series of letters; and I know of no one to whom they can with so much propriety be addressed as yourself. For many years the management of our eastern missions has devolved on you; and to you, no doubt, belongs both the honor and the responsibility of most of the changes which have from time to time been effected.

The painfulness of commencing a correspondence of this nature is rather enhanced than diminished by a recollection of the kind and courteous treatment which I have received from you, during the many years of our official connection; and which I gladly avail myself of this opportunity to acknowledge. It is now twenty-three years since I had the pleasure of meeting you at the University in Providence; a place hallowed by its association with the name of Roger Williams, and with the first struggles in New England for religious liberty. We there met as brethren, as equals; you were if I rightly remember, professor of Greek in the institution, while I was under appointment as a Missionary to Burnah. Our interview was a pleasant one; and I recollect your expressing a regret, that circumstances had prevented your becoming a missionary yourself. I had not been long in the missionary field, when you were chosen to occupy an important and responsible situation in the same general work. It was a satisfaction to me, in our subsequent correspondence, that I could indulge a freedom of opinion and expression such as belongs only to brethren and fellow-

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labourers in a common cause. The nature of the relation which subsisted between me, as a missionary, and yourself, as the official organ of an executive body, I had never examined with any particular attention; but supposed we were only bound together as ministers of the Gospel, engaged in the same work, on a footing of perfect equality. The gradual extension of executive authority, especially in the Burman Missions, and the discussions consequent upon this extension, awakened, from time to time, my earnest solicitude, yet it was not until after the convention at Maulmain, and the subsequent doings of the deputation, that I found myself compelled to adopt the unwelcome conclusion, that, whatever equality and fraternity there might be in theory, we stood practically in a very different relationship to each other; the one was regarded as acting in the capacity of a *Director*, the other in the capacity of a *Servant*.

The discussion on which I propose to enter, would have been more agreeable to my feelings could it have been confined solely to an examination of the principles on which missions are conducted. But justice to the subject requires that the tendency of these principles should be illustrated by instances of their actual operation. In doing this, I shall perhaps be constrained to say things that may be unpleasant; and I can scarcely hope to escape the charge of being in some instances severe and uncharitable. I have observed that persons who have ventured to speak against abuses, are apt to be stigmatized as possessing a *bad spirit*; this is an accusation which has been very freely applied to some of our Burman brethren, who, until they were found opposing the present changes, had been regarded as exemplary for their piety and candor. Whether it is for the sake of weakening the force of their testimony, that this somewhat indefinite charge is preferred against them, I shall leave for those who have preferred it, to settle with their own consciences. For myself, I make no pretensions to any especial gifts of charitableness and good feeling, nor

In speaking of the course pursued by yourself and colleagues, I shall endeavor to exercise a suitable degree of charity, and hope I may not put a wrong construction upon any of your acts. Sensible of my own liability to err, I would endeavor to make due allowance for others; and should I, in the following letters, do injustice to the measure or motives of yourself or any other individual, I beg to assure you that it will afford me sincere satisfaction to see my errors corrected. Truth is lovely, benignant ever, and precious to every candid mind; not merely such portions of truth as the partizans of this or that theory may select, but the whole truth; truth pure, unvarnished, impartial. Nothing else will prove of benefit to man; nothing else is worth contending for; nothing else will answer for missions abroad, or for the management of missionary affairs at home. Unless our work be built on this impregnable foundation, all our labors will be worse than vain.

In the convention at Maulmain, you strongly deprecated any discussion as to the relative rights of the different agencies employed in missions. You then expressed the opinion, that the moment we began to separate the missionaries and the executive department at home, that moment we should begin to undermine our own work: that such a course would

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be the *beginning of the end*. In this opinion you may have been correct. If so, those who have forced their brethren into a defence of their separate and distinct rights, must have assumed a heavy responsibility. But it was no doubt considered safer to *act* on the principle that the control of the executive over the missionaries was absolute, then to undertake the defense of such a principle, by argument before a missionary convention. While deprecating discussion however, the official organs of the Board have not hesitated to maintain and enforce their own views to the fullest extent. By the constant advocacy of these views in official documents and missionary publications, their partial endorsement, by the Missionary Union, has at length been secured. Under such circumstances I trust I shall be justified by my brethren generally, in giving a public expression to my own convictions, in opposition to those of yourself and colleagues. If our missionary relations are such as the New Testament recognizes, there need be no fear of discussion; truth never suffers from investigation. But if, on the contrary, our system is such, that we cannot safely discuss the relative position and rights of the laborers at home and abroad, there is room for a strong suspicion, to say the least, that we are not on scriptural ground. If our missionary policy stands on so frail a basis as to be shaken by an open and full examination, we cannot too soon commence removing the dangerous materials, and supplying their place by such as are in accordance with the primitive pattern.

Reserving this subject for further consideration, I remain
 Yours faithfully in the Gospel.

NATHAN BROWN.

TO THE REV. S. PECK, D D., COR. SEC. OF THE AM.
BAP. MISSIONARY UNION.

Rev. and Dear Sir:

There can be no doubt that the Christian Church, in its original organization, was essentially a missionary church. If there was any one object to which it was specially adapted, that object was the conversion of the world. If, then, the organization adopted by our Savior, and continued by his apostles, had especial reference to the prosecution of missionary labors, we may safely take their system as a model for all future periods of the church. Considerable latitude may doubtless be allowed for different modes of operation, suited to different circumstances and times; but no change of time and circumstances can justify us in establishing missionary organizations on a basis essentially different from that of the apostolic period.

To prepare the way for the discussion I have proposed, it will be convenient first to take a brief survey of the general principles on which the Kingdom of Christ was established, and in accordance with which the earliest missionary operations were conducted.

1. According to the teachings of the New Testament, *the ministers of the Gospel are*, in their appropriate sphere of labor, *independent of human authority and control*. They are the ambassadors of Christ, receiving their commission from him, and subject to his instructions alone. There is among them no gradation of authority; but all are placed on an equality by Him who has appointed them. It was with great reluctance that the apostles admitted this doctrine; and the repugnance with which they at first regarded it, became the means of its receiving the more ample confirmation. They appear to have had no conception of the possibility of forming a kingdom, in which there should not be some regular government,

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with a suitable gradation of officers for the management of its affairs. The Jewish system, as well as the government of Gentile nations, naturally led them to look for a similar organization among themselves. At three separate times the subject was brought to the notice of our Savior, and as often did the request of his disciples, for the appointment of leaders, meet his unqualified rebuke. He informed them that the gradations of office, and the exercise of authority belonged to the worldly governments, but that in his kingdom nothing of the kind was to be introduced. "Ye know that they which are accustomed to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and their great ones exercise authority upon them. But so SHALL IT NOT BE AMONG YOU." Mark 10: 42. After Christ's resurrection we never find the apostles discussing this point again; they no longer looked to worldly governments for the pattern of their organizations; and we find their practice to have uniformly been in accordance with the instructions they had received.

On the contrary, when the Christian Church was converted into a centralized ecclesiastical establishment, it began to conform its policy to that of the kingdom of this world. Caesar's kingdom became the model on which to build the kingdom of Christ. As the papal usurpation advanced, the different ranks and orders were multiplied, and a rigid conformity to the decisions of the ruling authority, in matters of doctrine and practice, was exacted from all; especially from the clergy. These, no longer the ministers of Christ, became the ministers of a church; the hired servants of a corporate, centralized, worldly establishment. In obedience to her orders, expressed through her regularly constituted organs, they performed their ministrations. Nearly all state churches, whether Papal or Protestant, have been formed after the same model. The ministers, instead of being independent, and responsible to Christ alone, are under human direction, and responsible to overseers appointed by human authority.

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3

As the different state churches of Protestant countries have generally imitated the Romish church in appointing overseers for their ministers, so it was to be expected that they would appoint directors to superintend the labors of their missionaries. When, therefore, we read an announcement that "the missionaries at Jerusalem are under the superintendence of Bishop Gobat," or that Mr. Josenhans, principal of the College at Basle, is "director" of the German missions in Southern India, it can occasion no surprise, as this is in perfect consistency with the principles on which their respective churches are founded. But if it should prove to be the case that Baptists or Congregationalists after having discarded the episcopal element in their churches at home, had introduced it into their missions, it would certainly present a very great incongruity.

2. Another feature which we find most strongly marked in the missions of the New Testament, is that the first preachers acted on the principle of a strict individualism; a *personal* and not a *combined responsibility*. Peter was not responsible for the acts of Paul, nor Paul for those of Peter. When Paul and Barnabas differed, each took his own course, independent of the other; neither claimed a right to control the movements of his associates or abridge his freedom by an appeal to the missionary body. There is no trace in the New Testament of what is called the "community system," and which, more or less, pervades nearly all modern missions. The organization of several missionaries into a company, having joint responsibilities, and conducting all their operations in accordance with a vote of the majority, is quite as incompatible with the doctrine of an independent ministry, as the establishment of an episcopal power. How far we have combined these two modes of government, by establishing an episcopal authority in the home direction, and the community system in the foreign field, and what has been the effect upon our missions, will appear more fully as we proceed.

3. The apostolic missions were distinguished for the *simplicity* of their organization. In reading the New Testament one is struck with the great amount of labor performed, and the almost total absence of machinery. It would in fact, seem that no formal organization, except the church, was considered necessary. There may have been subordinate agencies, but if so, we have every evidence which the nature of the case will admit, that these agencies confined themselves strictly to financial matters. Their authority could extend no further than the funds which might be placed in their hands; for the control of the churches or individual donors themselves could extend no further. They might withhold their support from any one whose labors they did not approve, but they could not direct those labors, or prescribe

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either the matter or the manner of their preaching, without infringing on the prerogatives of Him who calls and sends forth the labourers into the harvest.

The only machinery, which appears to me consistent with the principles of the New Testament, is a fiscal agency, or committees to receive and faithfully distribute the sums entrusted to their care. Although we have no positive evidence that there were such committees, in the primitive churches, for the management of missionary funds, yet we know that committees were appointed for other charitable objects, which establishes the principle of such appointment. At Jerusalem seven men were chosen to distribute the collections made for the poor. Acts vi. 3. Paul orders to accompany a committee from the church at Corinth, who might be chosen to convey their liberality to Jerusalem. 1 Cor. xvi. 3, 4.

The information furnished in the New Testament, of the mode in which the first missionaries were supported, is very brief, and for the most part incidental. The twelve disciples, and afterwards the seventy, were prohibited from providing themselves with means of support, while they labored in Judea, but were to depend on the people among whom they went. When they received their final commission to go and teach all nations, no such restriction was enforced. Accordingly we find that when the apostles went forth among the heathen, they received their support from the churches already formed, and avoided being dependent on the new communities which they were gathering. Paul refused to be supported by the church which he had gathered in Corinth, lest he should be burdensome to them, give occasion to those who sought occasion, and so hinder the Gospel of Christ. 2 Cor. xi. 8, 9, 12. He took wages from other churches, while doing service for the Corinthians. Rather than be chargeable to them, he labored with his own hands, to supply the wants of himself and those who were with him. Acts xviii. 3. He

[illegible]

did the same while preaching amongst the Ephesians and Thessalonians. Acts xx; 34: 2 Thess. 8, 9. While at Corinth he was supplied by the brethren from Macedonia, 2 Cor. xi; 9: and at Thessalonica by the Phillipian church, the only one from which he received pecuniary assistance during the first period of his labors in Greece. Phil. ix: 15, 16. There is little doubt that the other apostles and missionaries pursued a course similar to that of Paul; "they went forth taking nothing of the Gentiles." John, 7 v. After churches were formed, the apostles were careful to enforce upon them the duty not only of supporting their own pastors, but of sustaining those who went forth as missionaries. John exhorts Gaius to receive those who were preaching among the Gentiles, and "bring them on their journey;" in other words to provide the means of defraying their necessary expenses. Paul informs the Romans, that he expects to "be brought on his way" by them, when he takes his journey into Spain. The Corinthians also, from whom he would not receive support while with them, were expected to "bring him on his journey," when he should have received their contributions for the saints at Jerusalem. 1 Cor. xvi: 6. Titus was requested to see that Zenas and Apollos were "brought on their journey diligently," so that nothing should be wanting to them. Tit. iii: 13.

Thus while we have indications of considerable diversity in the methods by which the primitive missionaries were supported, we have no trace of any superintending body entrusted with the power of direction. This would have violated a principle. So long as the principles of the Gospel are preserved, it is a matter of secondary importance what particular mode is adopted for securing the necessary funds. These may be furnished by churches or by individuals; one church may act as a society by itself, or several churches may unite in one society; these societies may be small or large; supporting a single missionary, or a hundred missionaries;

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4. The relation between the primitive missionaries and the churches who supported them was *direct*. Those who contributed of their substance did it with a full knowledge of the purpose to which these donations were applied. The communication between the laborers abroad and their brethren at home was unrestricted. No intermediate party controlled the channels of information, or decided what should, what should not, come to the knowledge of the public. There existed no official agency, whose province it was to select and circulate such missionary intelligence as might be best adapted to keep alive the liberality of the churches, and to prevent the disclosure of facts that might operate unfavorably. While the channels of information were thus open, the delinquencies of no unworthy missionary could be long concealed from the Christian community; and although a shock would no doubt be given by every instance of unfaithfulness, yet its prompt development would prevent any apprehension on the part of the churches that their missionaries were not generally trustworthy.

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thly, with a free and open intercourse of this kind, such a wholesale denunciation of the missionaries as that which took place at the annual meeting in 1854, could never have occurred; or if it had occurred, the churches would have had at hand the means of disproving the charges, without waiting to receive a formal refutation from the missionaries themselves.

There is no right more sacred than that of a donor to understand all the particulars in reference to the manner in which his donations are appropriated. Any measures calculated to convert the executive of the Missionary Society into a close corporation, will only result in disaster to the cause. In like manner, all attempts to control the right, either of ministers or individuals, to designate the specific objects to which their donations shall be applied, however specious may be the plea of convenience, are equally unscriptural and unjust. It cannot be expected that Christians who feel the obligation which their Lord's commission imposes, will rest satisfied with merely paying their money into the treasury of a society; that commission is not properly obeyed, until they have before them the evidence that their funds have been judiciously expended in the work. This evidence can only be obtained by a full and free communication with the laborers, and not by a partial view, gathered from such portions of their official correspondence as may be selected for publication in the pages of a magazine.

It will no doubt be maintained that the simplicity of the primitive system is not suited to our times, and to the present circumstances of the foreign field. It must, however, be acknowledged that we are in a situation remarkably similar to that in which the apostles found themselves. Their field was the world, and so is ours. Their commission embraced all nations, and ours extends no farther. Whatever

Sent in May -

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Regularly for the present

John Ewing May 1854

Otis Halland Esq, New York, C

John Ballou Esq, Athens, D

difference there may be in the circumstances of the times, and in the facilities for communication, is in our favor. We can now make the passage to India with greater ease and safety than the apostles could go from Judea to Rome. Communication between the churches in America and their missionaries stationed at a distance of half the globe, is now more regular and rapid than it could possibly have been between the church at Jerusalem and the missionaries in Asia Minor. Funds can be transmitted with greater security, and at far less expense. If ever there was a necessity for multiplied agencies, and a central directory, clothed with authority to manage the affairs of missions, it must have been under such difficulties as the early Christians had to encounter. But no such directory was established; Christ had made no provision for its institution, and apostles found no necessity for for going beyond the pattern given. Now it is maintained that more systematic organizations are indispensable to the successful prosecution of our work; that without definite rules and institutions the carrying on of missions has been found impracticable. This seems to be little less than an impeachment of Divine wisdom. Rather than suppose the plan of Christ and his apostles to be inadequate to the propagation of the Gospel, through all countries and all ages, let us candidly review our ground, and enquire whether the results and tendencies of our present system are such as to justify its continuance. Yours very respectfully,

NATHAN BROWN.

missionary

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