

as the present circumstances of our Societies may seem more particularly to require.

During the past year, the increase of our numbers in Great Britain and Ireland is 2,434, and on the different Missionary Stations, 2,643, making, in the whole, 5,177. From this general statement, it appears that the increase in the Societies under the care of our Missionaries is greater than was ever known before in the space of one year. The increase in this country is smaller than usual; a circumstance attributed, in part, to the distress of the times, which has exerted an unfriendly influence on not a few of our Societies, and to various other causes which have been in active and injurious operation. It is cheering to us, however, that there is so considerable an increase; and it is our fervent and united prayer, that the "God of all grace" may pour out upon ourselves, and the congregations to whom we minister the "word of life," a large measure of his holy influence, and may thus more abundantly promote our true prosperity. At the present Conference, forty young men have been publicly admitted into full ministerial connexion with us, according to the usages of our body. All of these have travelled four years, and some of them, who have toiled amidst the privations and dangers of the Missionary life, a much longer period. They have all passed through their examinations to our entire satisfaction, and have taken their station among us, with our unanimous concurrence and approval. It will be gratifying to you also to know, that our Brethren in the United States of North America continue to enjoy an eminent degree of our heavenly Father's blessing; and to increase rapidly, both in numbers and in grace.

For every token of spiritual good in any part of the Connexion, we record our gratitude to God, "the Father of mercies, and God of all consolation." It is our humble persuasion that he will still be with us, and bless us. We address you with cheerful confidence, and invite you more diligently to co-operate with us in extending the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ. Receive, brethren, the word of exhortation; and disregard not advices which we have frequently offered to your consideration, and on which we still find it necessary to dwell. "To write the same things to you, to us indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe."

We cannot but embrace the present opportunity to recommend an earnest and constant attention to the vital doctrines which have been taught among us from the beginning. They are doctrines "according to godliness." By our venerable Founder and his associates they are explained in a manner eminently scriptural, clear, consistent, and practical. We beseech you to heed, lest you depart from them, or neglect that "form of sound words" in which they are conveyed to us. This is an age of bold and daring speculation; an age in which many professed advocates of our holy religion indulge a perilous propensity either to deny certain portions of sacred verity, or to array them in a garb which neither we nor our fathers have known. For this reason, we deem it "needful for us to write to you, and exhort you that ye should contend earnestly for the faith which was once delivered to the saints." Truth emanates from God; and it is eternal and unchanging as its almighty Source. Despise it not. Let the "Spirit of truth" guide you by his own inspired word, which is "settled for ever in heaven." Avoid novelties. Suspect the soundness of all speculations which tend to unsettle long-tried and established doctrines. They may appear profound and imposing; but they are, in reality, superficial, un-supported, and unsatisfying. "Many," observes the judicious Hooker, "talk of the truth, who never sounded the depth from whence it springeth." Remember the apostolic admonition, "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good." "Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth. Be not children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; but, speaking the truth in love, grow up into him in all things, which is the Head, even Christ."

Closely connected with this is another direction, which we would continually urge upon your regard, and which has respect to the inestimable blessings of deep Christian obedience. Ye are our witnesses that we have faithfully endeavoured to maintain the inseparable union of doctrinal instruction with

the spirituality and power of godliness. All is unavailable without this. To this our revered Founder specially devoted his attention and zeal. He was the great Divino of religious experience; and while he incessantly enforced the indispensable necessity of justification by faith in the sacrificial death of our Lord Jesus Christ,—of the direct and powerful testimony of God's Spirit with ours that we are adopted into his family,—of the entire renovation of the heart by the sanctifying Spirit,—and of a close and habitual walk with God, he forcibly exemplified the great scriptural truth, that "the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power," that it "is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." Brethren, "let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing." Satisfy not yourselves with low and ordinary attainments in the spiritual life. "Approach that for which also you are apprehended of Christ Jesus." "Meekly pass into the depths of God." For this end, attend, we beseech you, to the constant presence and agency of the Holy Spirit. He only can preserve the soul alive. Whatever our acquisitions may be, if he withdraw his vital influence, all spiritual enjoyments, all spiritual life, must languish and decline. "Cast me not away," prays the Psalmist "from thy presence, and take not thy Holy Spirit from me." Attend, then, to him. Grieve him not. Live in him; and unite with us in fervent supplication that His rich and manifold gifts may be poured into all our hearts, and may produce within us an entire conformity to his image, and an habitual preparation for every good work.

"Out of the heart are the issues of life." While you labour, therefore, to guard the "hidden man of the heart," permit us also to exhort you to the faithful discharge of all practical duties. "If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit." Let a strict correspondence be preserved between the spiritual influences and the visible fruits of Christian piety. The importance of this admonition will fully justify our descending to a few particulars, which appear to us at the present time to demand peculiar attention.

Among these more particular instructions, one has relation to the diligent and proper use of those ordinances of *Christian and mutual fellowship*, which are so largely instituted in our Societies. "Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together." Reflect often on the unspeakable advantages which arise from a free interchange of religious views and feelings suited to every state and circumstance. If others either contemptuously renounce or, at least, practically neglect, what we have so long proved to be some of the best means of spiritual improvement, "go not after them." Regularly attend the weekly meetings of your Classes; and at the quarterly visitations, when it is our desire to converse individually with you concerning the progress or decline of the divine life in your souls, freely meet us: give us this opportunity of discharging what we deem an essential part of our pastoral office among you, and convince us that our solicitude for your religious welfare is required, not with cold indifference and inattention, but with a sincere and steady concern for your own "growth in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

Suffer us, particularly, to mention the necessity of a serious and frequent attendance on that prime ordinance of the Christian institute, the *Sacrament of the Lord's Supper*; an ordinance solemnly appointed by our Lord himself, and designed to be a perpetual symbol of our Christian faith and profession, a motive to all the exercises of spiritual grace, and a strong practical pledge of our full submission to Jesus Christ, the Sovereign as well as the Saviour of his Church. Willfully and habitually to turn from the Lord's table, indicates an awful disregard of his express and dying injunction, and eminently endangers, not only the increase, but the very existence, of our faith and love. Yield to the authority of Him who has said, "This do in remembrance of me;" and while you partake of the sacred elements, joyfully anticipate that sacramental feast which it is our trust that we shall celebrate in the kingdom of God.—"For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come."

You are, further, exhorted to encourage meetings for social and public prayer; to observe the *Quarterly Fasts*, when special supplications should be offered for the more copious effusions of the Holy Spirit

on the church and the world; and to attend opportunities of week-night preaching. It is a source of much regret to us, that, in many instances, these opportunities are greatly neglected. Seasons of refreshment, specially needful amidst the daily cares and engagements of life, are thus omitted; and discourses, usually devoted to subjects of religious experience, and intended more particularly for the edification and comfort of our Societies and serious hearers, are comparatively lost. Omission of this kind are, we doubt not, highly detrimental to the religious improvement of many of our people. We would, therefore, affectionately caution you against them. Surely, in addition to the calm and delightful services of the Sabbath, one hour in the week is not too much, even for those who are most occupied with the concerns of time, to spend in an attendance on the public ministry of God's holy word.

To the fraternal care and sympathy which you owe to each other, we would also call your best attention. Remember that you are children of the same Father, members of the same body, and heirs of the same blessings. "Put on, therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering, forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a complaint against another, even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And, above all these things, put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness." "Where there is charity," says one of the Fathers, "there is humility; and where there is humility, there is peace." Maintain this mutual charity, and bring forth all its fruits.—Remove misconstructions. Cast a veil over your brethren's infirmities. Promote reconciliation. Be, at the same time, faithful in the administration of all necessary warning and admonition. "Exhort one another daily, while it is called to-day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." Under this direction, we would advert to the disadvantages which sometimes arise from the removal of members in different parts of the country. Instances, we fear, are not rare, in which persons remove without proper notes of recommendation; the consequence of which is, that, on arriving at a new place where they are, comparatively or entirely unknown, they neglect to unite themselves to the Society; and thus, without any settled design, they separate from communion with us, deprive themselves of those invaluable means of grace which they once found so beneficial to them, and, in several cases, lose the enjoyment of religion, and almost all relish for it. To prevent the recurrence of an evil like this, we specially request our Leaders to procure from the Superintendent of the Circuit, or his colleagues, suitable notes of removal for such members of their Classes as may be providentially called to change the place of their residence, and to exercise a paternal care for them after their departure: we entreat such as may remove, to watch against the temptations and dangers of new circumstances, and by no means to resign the privileges of Christian membership; and we affectionately invite any of our friends who may know or hear of approved members that have recently come amongst them, to take them by the hand, give them proper information and encouragement, and introduce them into a new circle of Christian acquaintance and brethren. Assist us to watch over the sheep confided by "the chief Shepherd" to our charge, lest they go astray from the fold, and fall under the power of him who "as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour."

In those pastoral advices, we would assign a conspicuous place to the important duties and obligations of *family religion*. To erect a family altar, on which morning and evening sacrifices shall be duly offered; to train children and dependents in the "nurture and admonition of the Lord;" and to preserve fidelity and affection in the exercise of all salutary restraint and discipline, is the imperative and indispensable office of every one to whom the "God of the families of the whole earth" has entrusted a domestic charge. Let it be your prayer and labour, brethren, that your families may be decidedly Christian; sacred inclosures, dedicated, in the wilderness of this world, to God; nurseries of the church, from which may be transplanted such "trees of righteousness" as, when your own leaf has withered, shall stand in the courts of the Lord, and flourish in the house of our God." It is in this way that we shall most effectually perpetuate the work which the