

necessary. There is no other means of operation in a district of country, or in a locality of a town or city, where churches do not exist, or do not exist in number and strength sufficient to act congregationally upon the population around them. But these are only temporary expedients, which must ultimately give place to measures based on other principles. In proportion as churches come to exist in numbers and means adequate to the work of evangelizing their vicinities, the necessity for artificial combinations will gradually subside, and may at length be safely dispensed with. In them the Spirit of God resides; through them, as the principal means, he will subdue the world, and complete the conquests of the Head of the Heathen. Every church, like the glorious gospel, of which it is the depository, may be likened unto fire and leaven, which operate by assimilating to themselves their kindred elements, when such elements are brought into contact. Churches ought, at all points, to act on surrounding unbelievers, and at once to absorb the faithful into their several fellowships; or, to change the figure, the armies of the cross, like other armies, require their advanced guards, their spies, and pioneers,—such as missionaries, itinerants, and other classes of labourers; but the conquests of that cross are to be completed, its authority and government established, and its empire upheld, by its own organized masses—that is, by Gospel Churches. Missionary efforts, itinerant labours, and all others of a conventional and general nature, must ultimately terminate in those of a local and congregational character. Such is the order of nature. This principle ought, therefore, so far as practicable, to be steadfastly and uniformly acted upon in all our gospel enterprises,