

a religious body—their own defraying the expenses arising from the support of their clergy and other contingencies. This is probably the nearest approach that can be made to a purely voluntary church—to a body of men defraying by their voluntary contributions, the expenses of the religious privileges they enjoy. Yet, even in this case, it is apparent that this religious body only does so in part. Without the missionaries, its religion had been a blank; and in so far as it pays not the pecuniary outlay necessary to the existence and sending forth of these missionaries, its own voluntary contributions defray not the expenses, of the system of religion which it enjoys. What now have these missionaries cost? The question is difficult to answer. It were a fallacy to reckon the mere expenses alone of the maintenance, and education, and sending forth, of the individual missionary. To approximate to the actual expenditure, we must consider, to how many thousands, hundreds of thousands, nay millions, the gospel must be effectively preached in any land, before you can reasonably expect to gather out of the community, men possessed of the zeal, and talent, and patience, necessary to form, and send forth the successful missionary. We will not attempt such an estimate, but in so far as it is brought before us in what we have next to remark. If missions to the heathen be held to belong to the voluntary system, because the contributions to their support, either by churches or individuals, are voluntary, it must be confessed that the system is deplorably deficient. The fact, though a melancholy one, cannot be denied, that though more than five sixths of the earth has long been overspread with people destitute of religion, and though for the last two or three hundred years these regions have lain open to missionaries, yet do they still remain unchristianized—points only, here and there, appearing illuminating the deep gloom of heathenism that darkens so many lands.

To turn however from a case necessary to be stated, but which is only distantly connected with the matter in hand, to cases that are immediately connected with it—to churches such as the Independents and Methodists in England, and the Seceders in Scotland, who are held forth to us as examples of the efficiency of the voluntary system. And let us enquire, in the first place, how far the men who in these cases united to form themselves into religious communities, actually themselves paid the expenses of that religion which was among them, when so united. Now, it is notorious that the majority of these had been members of one or other of the national churches, and from them had imbibed their religious knowledge and feelings. Their re-

ligion was consequently the offspring of these national churches, and not of any voluntary system. Some indeed in England—for in Scotland there was scarce one—joined themselves to these bodies at their first formation, over whom religious feelings and convictions had not previously had any perceptible sway. Yet even these had learned something of what religion was, and had been prepared for embracing it, by the national churches. They had known speculatively, but still they had known, the great religious truths, which long radiating from these sources, had fixed themselves in the general convictions of the land, and were known to be recognised as verities by the mass of the good and great throughout it. These dissenters from the national churches sought not to make a new religion, but to improve the old. Either, as the Methodists in England, they thought that there was a deficiency of zeal in the administrations of the church, or, as the Seceders in Scotland, and the Independents in England, they conceived that some point in the government of the church was wrong and tended to corruption. But it is very certain, that when any of these bodies first met, had they asked themselves the question, whence is the material, the substantive medium through whose agency we received that religion which is among us, though they might have looked round in various directions, they must have at length turned themselves to the national church. They could not then be styled voluntaries; if by that term we mean to designate those who pay by voluntary contribution the pecuniary outlay that has been incurred by the infusion into them of the religious knowledge and feelings they possess.

Again, from the moment that any of these formed themselves into a separate religious community, the operation of the system into which a regard for their well-being led them, has in reality been continually more and more divesting them of that voluntary character which they probably believed they were assuming. No sooner have they seriously turned their thoughts on what is for the good of a church, than they have unavoidably been led to do all that in them lay, to form themselves into great establishments—into systems intending to operate, and therefore providing the means for operating, on successive generations. They have provided churches and parsonages as commodious and durable as possible, calculated to last not for one, but for many ages. Their educational establishments have been on a similar plan. If they have not become national churches, it is not because they have not endeavoured to become such, but because they have not been able to make themselves such. Each of these churches believed that