

DECENTRALIZATION IN MISSIONS.

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In a very able article on missions in the *British and Foreign Evangelical Review*, the writer makes this startling statement, that "*the churches of Great Britain have never as yet made foreign missions a part of their work.*" What strikes us at first as being a strange assertion is, however, justified by a further statement, which is almost as true of our country as of Great Britain: "The great missionary societies in England are all outside the churches, which, *as churches*, have nothing to do with their maintenance or management. It is true the money comes from members of the churches, and church-members are managers of the societies; but all that the churches do is to manifest a benevolent neutrality, or to bestow a benevolent patronage. Missions to the heathen world are not made *the work* of the churches; they are a *parergon*—we had almost said a by-play, or a May holiday—instead of being the Church of Christ's first work, as it was her Lord's final commission—a work demanding the highest talent and most devoted service."

It cannot be denied that this statement is strictly according to fact, and the fact is one of the most serious which confronts us in our missionary operations. Responsibility is the mother of activity. Only as Christians are sensible of their obligation will they be moved to active consecration. Therefore, how to distribute responsibility for the work of evangelizing the world is the great problem to be solved in the present "crisis of missions."

Now we do not question for a moment the great value and indispensable necessity of our missionary boards. The splendid work which they have done during the last hundred years has amply justified the wisdom of their founders; and it is to be earnestly hoped that the number and efficiency of such societies may be greatly increased in the years to come; but there are certain perils connected with these great organizations to which we should be keenly alive.

In the first place, they tend to create a missionary trust, in which responsibility is centred in a few hands, funds administered by a few men, and the world's evangelization syndicated in a few trustees. As great emporiums shut up small shops and drive the petty store-keepers out of business, so wholesale missions tend to concentrate the trade in Gospel pearls in a single firm, and thus to create a kind of evangelical monopoly. President Wayland, whose views of missionary policy, expressed more than forty years ago, have been more and more justified by events, had very strong convictions on this point. He predicted that the tendency would be steadily developed to carry on missions by representation instead of by participation—churches turning over their responsibility to boards, boards relegating it to executive committees, and executive committees to secrete