CHAPTER FOUR

PRAYER IN CONCERT

The principal setting of prayer for the missionary cause was the monthly concert for prayer for mission. When it began, it was neither monthly, nor was it restricted to missions. It was not a "concert" in the common sense of the term today, of musical performance. "Concert" can also be defined as "mutual agreement; concord; harmony of action."[1] A "concert for prayer" was prayer for a common purpose at a common time, agreed upon by many people in different places.

I. PRAYER AND THE CONCERT FOR PRAYER BEFORE 1810

Origin of the Concert for Prayer

In October, 1744, some ministers in Scotland agreed to pray "that our Lord's kingdom may come."[2] They each did this every week, either Saturday

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[1] Webster's New World Dictionary of the American Language, College Edition (Cleveland and New York: World, 1962), 303.

[2] Jonathan Edwards, Humble Attempt, 457.

night or early Sunday morning, and also the first Tuesday of each quarter, beginning November 1744, for two years.[3] They prayed privately, in small groups, or in large public gatherings, depending on circumstances. After the two year experiment, the ministers decided to continue it for another seven years. In a memorial dated 26 August 1746 they invited others to join them.

Jonathan Edwards became the strongest promoter of the concert, when he published in 1747 An Humble Attempt to Promote Explicit Agreement and Visible Union of God's People, in Extraordinary Prayer, for the Revival of Religion and the Advancement of Christ's Kingdom on Earth. He believed that the commitment to a concert for prayer at specific times aided in performing a duty that was too easily neglected.[4] For Edwards, the purpose of the concert was "the revival of religion and the advancement of Christ's kingdom on earth." He closely associated the descent of the Holy Spirit, revivals, and the missionary movement. In the mid-eighteenth century the concert for prayer was observed by some Congregationalists and Presbyterians in America, as well as in the Church of Scotland. Although the practice of the concert declined in the late eighteenth century, it never completely died out.[5]

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[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid., 455.

[5] Samuel Miller, Letters on the Observance of the Monthly Concert in Prayer (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, [1845]), 16.

John Erskine (1721-1803) of Scotland, who as a young pastor corresponded with Edwards, in 1784 sent a copy of Edwards' Humble Attempt to Baptists in Northamptonshire, Britain.[6] Before the year was out, the local Baptist association resolved to encourage a meeting of prayer for the revival and spread of religion, to be held in their churches on the first Monday of each month. Other Baptist Associations, and some other churches soon joined, and in 1789 the Humble Attempt was republished in Britain.[7]

Interest in Britain caused Edwards' Humble Attempt to be republished in the United States in 1794,[8] beginning a movement to revive the concert on the first Tuesday of each quarter. Using circular letters, the movement soon received endorsements from prominent clergy, including Samuel Spring, Jedidiah Morse, Samuel Hopkins, John Rodgers, John Livingston, Ashbel Green, and Samuel Nott, Sr. (1754-1852). The Synod of New York and New Jersey, and the

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[6] Berg, Constrained, 93; Ernest A. Payne, "The Evangelical Revival and the Beginnings of the Modern Missionary Movement," Congregational Quarterly [London] 21 (1943): 228-29.

[7] John Sutcliff, "Preface by a Former English Editor," in Humble Attempt, by Jonathan Edwards, 441-42. See also John Foster, "The Bicentenary of Jonathan Edwards' 'Humble Attempt,'" International Review of Missions 37 (1948): 381.

[8] Elizabeth Town: Shepard Kollock, 1794--NUC 156:176. An Humble Attempt was also included in the collections of the Works of Edwards published in Britain and America, beginning in 1806 in Leeds, Br., and 1808 in Worcester, Mass., and frequently republished throughout the period under study--NUC 156:166-68,176; 720:500.

North Hartford Association endorsed the practice in 1794.[9] By September of 1795 the Synod of New York and New Jersey observed that the quarterly concert for prayer "had been generally observed in the congregations under their care,"[10] and voted to continue the observance. The practice also spread rapidly in New England,[11] and was recommended in 1796 by the General Association of Connecticut.[12]

The Directors of the London Missionary Society in December, 1797, resolved that the first Monday of every month, at 7:00 P.M. "be announced to the public as designed for solemn prayer for the Missionary Society."[13] In this action, the concert for prayer, which always included missions as part of its concern, became a concert specifically for missions. Monthly prayer services, rotating among the larger churches of London, were soon keeping alive through the year the interdenominational excitement of an LMS annual meeting.

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[9] "The United Prayers of the Churches, for the Universal Spread of the Knowledge and Glory of Christ," EM 3 (1795): 198-202.

[10] J. C., pseud., "Intelligence," Theological Magazine 1 (1795-96): 240.

[11] S. M. Worcester, Samuel Worcester, 1:233.

[12] GA I, 108.

[13] LMS Reports , 67.

The New York Missionary Society adopted a plan for social prayer on 18 January 1798. On the second Wednesday of each month, "beginning at candle-light," a service was held in one of the supporting churches in New York City, at which prayers were offered for missions, including the NYMS.[14]

Beliefs, Settings, and Disciplines of Prayer

The nature of the concert for prayer, and its evolution, was shaped by the convictions and practices of prayer of the early supporters of missions.

Beliefs About Prayer. To the common mind, prayer was asking God for something. However, for devout evangelical Christians of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, prayer was much more. Prayer was the heart of a living relationship with a loving God. Jonathan Edwards drew an analogy to prayer when he said in a sermon, "It is the nature of love to be averse to absence, and to love a near access to those whom we love. We love to be with them; we delight to come often to them, and to have much conversation with them."[15] Prayer was a way of communicating with someone who was deeply loved; the believer loved God, longed to be with God, and therefore found much joy in prayer.

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[14] NYMS, Directors, "The Plan for Social Prayer, adopted January 18, 1798, by the Directors of the New York Missionary Society," New York Missionary Magazine 1 (1800): 50-51. Dated 9 January 1798 in ABC, ser, 23, vol. 3.

[15] Jonathan Edwards, "Hypocrites Deficient in the Duty of Prayer," in The Works of President Edwards, ed. Sereno E. Dwight (New York: S. Converse, 1829), 6:79.

On the subject of prayer, the literature of the Second Great Awakening was remarkably consistent with what Edwards had said a half century earlier. An article in the Connecticut Evangelical Magazine and Religious Intelligencer, in 1814 gave a more precise definition: "Prayer is that blessed mean by which a correspondence is maintained with God himself, and through which spiritual strength and knowledge may always be derived from Heaven, proportioned to our needs."[16]

Prayer provided spiritual strength and knowledge in several ways to those who came to it with the right attitude. (1) The act of approaching God in prayer was an acknowledgement of the sovereignty of God, and the dependence on God of the person praying. This in itself was a blessing; this recognition of God's sovereignty was the only foundation on which a relationship with God could be built.[17] (2) Through prayer, a person could have an experience of God that would increase one's faith. Edwards described in another sermon on prayer how God not only accepted prayers, but took action to answer them:

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[16] "The Importance of Prayer, to Those Engaged in the Weighty and Changing Scenes of Life," CEMRI 7 (1814): 372.

[17] Jonathan Edwards, "The Most High a Prayer-Hearing God," in The Works of President Edwards, ed. Sereno E. Dwight (New York: S. Converse, 1829), 6:321; Crito, pseud., "Observations on Prayer," Theological Magazine 1 (1795-96): 249; Israel, pseud., "On the Duty of Prayer," CEM 6 (1805-06): 44; M. M., pseud., "On the Duty of Prayer," CEMRI 5 (1813): 186-87; Alpha, pseud., "On the Prayer of Faith," Utica Christian Repository 1 (1822): 362; Philos, pseud., "Divine Immutability and Prayer," Evangelist 1 (1824): 174; [J. C. Walton], "On Intercessory Prayer," Quarterly Christian Spectator 4 (1832): 267.

> He *acts* agreeably to his acceptance. He sometimes manifests his acceptance of their prayers, by special discoveries of his mercy and sufficiency which he makes to them in *prayer*, or immediately after. While they are praying, he gives them sweet views of his glorious grace, purity, sufficiency, and sovereignty.[18]

(3) Edwards also pointed out that prayer was submission of our wills to God's will. He explained that through prayer, God enabled the persons praying, "with great quietness to rest in him . . . submitting to his will, and trusting in his grace and faithfulness."[19] The prayer of Jesus in the Garden was often lifted up as a model of prayer. After asking the Father-God that he might be spared the suffering of the Cross, Jesus prayed, "not my will, but thine, be done" (Luke 22:42). (4) When the person praying had poured out all of his or her concerns to God, that person experienced a blessing in a feeling of relief, that did not depend on the favorable outcome of one's petitions. As expressed in New York's Theological Magazine in 1795,

> He who has a true spirit of prayer, comes to the throne of grace with freedom and boldness, and pours out his heart before God, and unbosoms himself without restraint, casting all his cares upon God; and in this way the soul gets ease and sweet rest.[20]

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[18] Jonathan Edwards, "Most High," 315.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Crito, "Observations on Prayer," 251.

Also, (5) through prayer, a person received the love of God, and was thus motivated to love and forgive others and to be fruitful in good works.[21]

For the believer, prayer was not so much an activity as it was a way of life. Jonathan Edwards said that prayer was to the regenerate person what breathing was to the earthly person, and he called on his congregation to "live prayerful lives."[22] The periodicals of the Second Great Awakening often spoke of a "spirit of prayer," which was the same thing. It was an application of the Apostle Paul's admonition to "pray without ceasing." (1 Thessalonians 5:17). Edwards defined the "true spirit of prayer" as, "no other than God's own Spirit dwelling in the hearts of the saints. And as this spirit comes from God, so doth it naturally tend to God in holy breathings and pantings."[23]

The leaders of the Great Awakenings, like Christians in other ages, identified two kinds of prayer: secret and social, or private and public.

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[21] Jonathan Edwards, "Hypocrites," 86; Israel, "On the Duty of Prayer," 46.

[22] Jonathan Edwards, "Hypocrites," 73; Jonathan Edwards, "Most High," 327.

[23] Jonathan Edwards, "Hypocrites," 73. See also the list of eighteen characteristics of a "true spirit of prayer," of which number one was: "the holy spirit of God, dwelling in, and influencing the hearts of his people; and is therefore a spirit of LOVE, and of a sound mind; a spirit of love to God and man."--Crito, "Observations on Prayer," 249. See also: "The life of a real Christian, is a life of prayer. He not only has set seasons for secret and social prayer; but breathes out to God ejaculations all the day long, in adoration, confession, petition, thanksgiving, or intercessions. Almost every occurrence in life puts in motion this spirit; and thus, he grows in grace, and finds a heaven begun in his soul."--Israel, "On the Duty of Prayer," 45.

Secret Prayer. Secret prayer was commonly called "the closet." This came from the words of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 6 6: "But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly." In the closet, one's actions were uninhibited by thoughts of how one appeared to others. As an ATS tract, Religion of the Closet, put it, "The absence of every human witness emboldens us to throw off all restraint, which would prevent the freedom of our address to God, and invites us to 'pour out our hearts before him.'"[24] The believer was advised to designate some private place as sacred space. It could be the person's room, a closet, or a curtained off corner of the room. It might be outdoors, in a field, or grove of trees. The believer was advised to set aside regular times for the disciplines of the closet, for, "What is left to any time, is likely to be done at no time."[25]

In the closet one could follow certain disciplines, such as (1) the reading of Scripture, (2) meditation, (3) self-examination, (4) writing in a diary.[26] Reading

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[24] James Bennett, Religion of the Closet, Publications of the ATS, no. 69 (New York: ATS, [1826]), 2. This tract was previously published by the New England Tract Society by 1815. See also Secret Prayer, Publications of the ATS, no. 340 (New York: ATS, [1836]). By 1850 the ATS had published 76,000 copies of no. 69, and 208,000 of no. 340.

[25] Bennett, Religion, 5-6.

[26] Bennett, Religion, 2-4; Isaac Watts, To Children and Youth, on the Importance of Prayer, Publications of the ATS, no. 29 (New York: ATS, [1825]), 6-7. This tract was previously

Scripture helped get a person in a more prayerful mood. If a person had time, she or he could also read other devotional literature. Self-examination required one to plumb to the depths of one's soul, and to examine one's heart in relationship with God. Several popular tracts contained questions and reflections to aid the devout Christian in self-examination.[27] Pious Christians often kept diaries, which, like that of David Brainerd, were reflections on the exercises of the closet and the struggles of the heart, not the events of the day. Through diary entries, a person could later return to past spiritual struggles, unfiltered by what the passing years do to memory. The tract, Religion of the Closet, succinctly observed,

> Rising from the throne of grace, we shall have frequent occasions to note down in our diary the history of our intercourse with God, and record those events to which we may in future look back, to slay our pride, cheer our hope, invigorate our faith, and raise our hearts in gratitude to Him, who appeared at Bethel.[28]

Social Prayer. Social prayer had a dual function of giving glory to God and edifying those in attendance. Common settings for social prayer were the

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published by the New England Tract Society in 1814. The ATS had published 100,000 copies of no. 29 by 1850.

[27] The Closet Companion; or a Help to Self-Examination, Publications of the ATS, no. 21 (New York: ATS, [1825]); Helps to Self-Examination, Publications of the ATS, no. 146 (New York: ATS, [1826]). The former was previously published by the New England Tract Society in 1814, the latter by 1823. By 1850 the ATS had published 104,000 copies of no. 21, and 87,000 copies of no. 146.

[28] Bennett, Religion, 8.

Family Altar, prayer with the sick and afflicted, "Conferences" or prayer meetings, and public worship. Social prayer commonly included the reading of Scriptures, and the singing of hymns. Family worship not only glorified God and edified family members, it also created a closeness in the family, and encouraged gentleness on the part of parents, and respect from children.[29] "Conferences" were meetings of small groups in homes, for prayer, Bible reading, and the singing of hymns.[30] In the intimacy of this setting, more participants felt free to express themselves. Also, in conferences of women, members of that sex had the opportunity to lead in public prayer.

Prayer was one element of the regular Sunday morning and afternoon services, and was normally led by the Pastor. A mid-week prayer meeting gave a limited number of the congregation an opportunity to offer prayers. Congregations held other prayer meetings on special occasions, the monthly concert for prayer for missions being the most common.

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[29] For descriptions of family worship see: Philip Doddridge, Family Worship, Publications of the ATS, no. 18 (New York: ATS, [1825]); Edward Bickersteth, The Domestic Altar, Publications of the ATS, no. 230 (New York: ATS, [1829]). The former was previously published by the Religious Tract Society (London) and the New England Tract Society in 1814. By 1850 the ATS had published 174,000 copies of no. 18 and 102,000 copies of no. 230.

[30] A description of one such group is found in R. Marks, The Village Prayer Meeting, Publications of the ATS, no. 199 (New York: ATS, [1827]). By 1850 the ATS had published 260,000 copies of no. 199.

An article on "social prayer," reprinted in at least two evangelical periodicals, emphasized that social prayer (1) should express the united concerns of the church, (2) should be humble, (3) simple, (4) fervent, (5) short, and (6) appropriate to the occasion.[31]

II. THE CONCERT AND THE AMERICAN BOARD

When the first missionaries departed in February 1812, the quarterly concerts for prayer that had been advocated in 1794 were no longer numerous. A movement for a monthly concert soon arose from two sources, the women, and the missionaries.

As secretary of the Boston Female Society for Missionary Purposes, Mary Webb wrote a circular letter on 3 February 1812--the week of the ordination of the first missionaries--calling on women to unite in prayer on the first Monday afternoon of every month. Webb wrote,

> We likewise think it desirable . . . that we should all hold our meetings on the same day. The idea that many of our dear sisters, in different places, were met at the same time, and engaged in the same delightful employment of praying down blessings on mankind, would tend to strengthen our faith, increase our union, animate our hopes, and cheer our prospects.[32]

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[31] A Lover of Zion, pseud., "Social Prayer," RI 7 (1822-23): 26-29.

[32] Vaill, Mary Webb, 46-47. See also: Mary Webb, "Tribute of Gratitude from the Boston Female Society for Missionary Purposes," Panoplist 11 (1815): 323.

Reflecting Edwards' original request, she called on women to pray "for the out-pouring of the Holy Spirit; a general revival of pure and undefiled religion, and a universal spread of the Gospel."[33]

By March 1815, Webb was in correspondence with about sixty female societies and many isolated individuals, who were uniting for prayer every first Monday afternoon. She was by then interpreting the purpose of the meetings as prayer--and financial support--for missions.[34]

In April 1815, the Panoplist published a letter from missionaries Gordon Hall and Samuel Nott written from Bombay in April 1814,

> We have a prayer meeting to seek God's blessing on our mission here, every Wednesday evening and uniformly observe the evening of the first Monday in every month, as a season of prayer for the Church, in union with the friends of missions in England and in India. It would be very pleasing to be informed, whether this season is observed, and how extensively, by our friends in America, as at present we have no appointed season for a union in prayer with them.[35]

Lonely, and encountering hardships, the missionaries greatly desired the prayers of their supporters in America. Like the British missionaries, they wanted a set time when--in spite of the distances--they were united with their friends in America in prayer for a common purpose. Prayer was communion with God; a

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[33] Vaill, Mary Webb, 47; M. R., pseud., Letter [29 Dec. 1814], Panoplist 11 (1815): 324.

[34] Webb, "Tribute," 323-24.

[35] Gordon Hall and Samuel Nott, "Letter from the Missionaries to the Rev. Dr. Worcester [8 April 1814]," Panoplist 11 (1815): 183.

"concert" for prayer was at the same time a spiritual experience of unity with fellow Christians.

In January 1815, Evarts, writing as "A.B." in the Panoplist, noted the observance of the monthly concert and encouraged it.[36] Writing as "A.M." two months later, Evarts observed that the previous article had received a warm response, and "that a large number of churches will commence the observance of this concert, on the first Monday of the present month."[37] That same year, 1815, the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church endorsed the monthly concert of prayer, "for the coming and glorious reign of Christ on earth."[38] The General Association of New Hampshire and General Convention of Vermont also recommended the concert for prayer in 1815.[39]

The monthly concert rapidly spread among Presbyterian and Congregational churches. The Presbyterian Church noted the "general" or

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[Jeremiah Evarts], "Concert of Prayer," Panoplist 11 (1815): 19-20. Evarts had suggested that supporters consider the Monthly Concert in October 1813--Evarts, "Address, 1813," 75. Another source of the concert was a post-war substitution of prayer for missions in place of prayers for one's country, offered during the War of 1812--"Historical Sketch of the Monthly Concert," Christian Spectator 8 (1826): 131.

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[Jeremiah Evarts], "Concert of Prayer,' Panoplist 11 (1815): 124.

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GA I, 602.

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John H. Church, "History of the General Association of New Hampshire," AQR 10 (1837-38): 255; Merrill, "General Convention of Vermont," 39.

"almost universal" practice of the concert for prayer in Presbyterian churches, in the narratives of religion of 1817, 1818 and 1822.[40] In January 1818 a writer to the Boston Recorder estimated that in New England alone there were over 600 Congregational churches observing the monthly concert for prayer, besides many Baptists and others.[41] The monthly concert for prayer for missions, an institution unknown to the first missionaries when they embarked in 1812, had found some supporters over the next three years, was strongly promoted in 1815, and by 1818 was "nearly universal" among the supporters of missions in America.[42]

The American Board strongly promoted the concert for prayer. When William J. Armstrong became a general agent in 1834, Benjamin B. Wisner sent him a long letter of instructions, in which he said,

> Prayer is as real a means of converting the world as contributing funds, Sending missionaries, printing + distributing Bibles and Tracts, and preaching the Gospel, and in some respects even more important. Let it be

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40 GA I, 650 (1817); 679 (1819); GA II, 60 (1822).

41 "History of the Concert of Prayer," BR 3 (18 Aug. 1818): 136. In June 1818 a writer to the Religious Intelligencer estimated that 500 congregations were observing the Monthly Concert of Prayer for Missions; the editor estimated twice that number were observing the occasion--Philanthropos, pseud., "Missionary Collections," RI 3 (1818-19): 78.

42 "History of the Concert of Prayer," 136.

> a primary object, Therefore, to impress the people with this idea. And let the monthly Concert have much of your attention.[43]

By the late 1830s many congregations were shifting the Concert from Monday evening to Sunday afternoon or evening. When the old school Presbyterian General Assembly formally made the shift in 1838,[44] they were just recognizing a growing trend. Domestic Secretary Armstrong brought this shift to the attention of the American Board's annual meeting in 1838, and suggested that they make a decision. Armstrong expressed the concern that, "This change began, and has continued almost to the present time, without any extensive concert among those who have adopted it."[45] Armstrong asked the Board to express its judgment, in order to promote uniformity of practice. The annual meeting of the Board decided to let public opinion settle the matter "without any direct agency or interference of the Board."[46] The trend to Sunday continued. The idea of a "concert" of prayer was being lost. It was still a meeting to pray for missions, but there was no longer the feeling that Christians all around the world were uniting in prayer at the same time for the same holy

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43 Benjamin B. Wisner to William J. Armstrong, 11 June 1834, CBFM Papers, box 1, folder 21. Union Theological Seminary, Richmond, Va. Copy: ABC, ser. 7, vol. 1, p. 219.

44 GA [os], 45.

45 William J. Armstrong, "Monthly Concert for Prayer," AR, 1838:38.

46 AR, 1838:38.

purpose. What happened at the concert was also evolving.

III. ELEMENTS OF THE CONCERT FOR PRAYER

There was a great variety in both the quality and the content of the concert for prayer. The joint concert held by Park-street and Old South Churches in Boston was reported in the religious press, sometimes all across the country. One of the secretaries of the American Board was usually present, with the latest correspondence from the furthest reaches of the planet. On the other hand, in too many parishes, the concert was characterized by a "continual dull sameness."[47] An 1838 ABCFM tract estimated that only half of the congregations in the Board's constituency observed the Concert, and in those churches only twelve per cent of the members attended.[48] Complaints were often made that the concert was poorly attended, and mostly by women.[49]

A representative description of a concert done well, which appeared in the Vermont Chronicle and then in the Religious Intelligencer in 1829 stated:

> At the hour of meeting, I bent my steps towards the place of prayer. . . . While I was taking my seat, the minister entered. . . . The minister, without waiting till all had come in, commenced the exercises by reading four stanzas of a Psalm, which contained double that number. . . . The minister

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47 Miller, Letters, 33.

48 Hollis Read, Pray Less or Do More ([Boston: ABCFM, 1838]), 8.

49 Miller, Letters, 47; Anderson, Foreign Missions, 179.

rose to pray. . . . His views were spread at once over the globe. . . . He seemed for the time, to forget himself and his own people, except as they formed a part of that great company, in every part of the world, who united at that precious hour, in offering the prayer--*Thy kingdom come.*

At the close of this prayer, three stanzas were sung. Then, in an address of about ten minutes, the minister detailed some interesting facts in relation to the Palestine Mission. A brother was then called upon to pray, who, if I might judge from the appropriateness of his topics . . . and from the apparent fervency of his spirit, understood very well the *object* of the Monthly Concert. The minister then continued his remarks about ten minutes longer, stating some additional facts. . . . A third prayer was then offered up by a brother, who though he seemed to pray like a good man, was so intent on obtaining a blessing for the church and society with which he stood connected, that he apparently forgot, till near the close of his prayer, the occasion which had called us together. . . .

After the prayer last mentioned, the minister asked if any one present had a remark to offer. An individual arose, and in a short but touching address set forth the duty and the privilege of letting our *alms* accompany our *prayers.* This man, when he had done speaking, was called upon to offer the concluding prayer. . . . When he had concluded, a contribution was taken, and the meeting was closed by singing the Christian Doxology in the tune of 'Old Hundred.'

As I left the room, I felt that I had, in reality, attended a *Monthly Concert.*[50]

With the exception of one inappropriate prayer, this was a model monthly concert. It consisted of four of the five elements often included in a concert: (1) prayer, (2) the singing of hymns, (3) the sharing of missionary information, (4) a collection. The fifth element, which many persons thought should be missing, was (5) a sermon.

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[50] Concentus, pseud., "Monthly Concert," RI 13 (1828-29): 804. The Doxology referred to was probably one written by Isaac Watts, and popular among Congregationalists in the nineteenth century.

Many advocates of mission discouraged the delivery of a sermon at the monthly concert. They believed the concert for prayer should have a different character from the Sunday morning service, and be clearly focused on prayer for missions. However, sermons and addresses "for the monthly concert," were published by parties friendly to the American Board, which indicates that the practice did exist.[51] All of these published addresses were short, and discussed either missions or prayer.

Prayer

According to the critics of poorly done concerts, prayers should be appropriate. They should not be the same old prayers offered on every other occasion for the needs within the parish; they should be for missions. They should be intelligent prayers, grounded on solid information of the needs of missions.[52] Following the pattern of other prayer meetings, the Pastor and

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Enoch Pond, Short Missionary Discourses, or Monthly Concert Lectures (Worcester: Dorr and Howland, 1824). One of the lectures, "Paul, a Missionary to the Heathen," had been previously published--Christian Spectator 5 (1823): 453-57; reprint, MH 19 (1823): 322-26. Other addresses for the monthly concert included--Melancthon, pseud., "Address at a Monthly Prayer Meeting," Evangelical and Literary Magazine 2 (1819): 487-93; "An Abstract of a Sermon Suited to the Monthly Concert," NP 16 (1842): 69-72.

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Concentus, "Monthly Concert"; "Monthly Concert of Prayer," Evangelical Recorder 2 (4 Aug. 1821): 190-91; Ansel D. Eddy, "Method of Conducting the Monthly Concert for Prayer," MH 30 (1834): 388-94; Miller, Letters, 32-38; Beriah Green, "An Address Adapted to the Monthly Concert for Prayer," in The Miscellaneous Writings of Beriah Green (Whitesboro, N.Y.: Oneida Institute, 1841), 69.

several of the brethren shared in the prayer leadership. Samuel Miller (1769-1850), a corporate member of the ABCFM 1812-1839, and then an active supporter of the Presbyterian BFM, recommended the offering of three prayers at each concert, and that the prayers, "ought seldom, very seldom, to exceed seven or eight minutes each."[53]

Because the friends of the American Board did not believe in reading prayers, published prayers from the monthly concerts do not exist. However, some descriptions of monthly concerts do indicate the content of the prayers. Descriptions include the article from the Vermont Chronicle quoted above, an 1821 Boston Recorder article reprinted in the Auburn, New York, Evangelical Recorder, an 1828 "Address Adapted to the Monthly Concert," by Beriah Green, and Samuel Miller's Letters on the Observance of the Monthly Concert in Prayer, published in 1845.

According to these reports, concert goers prayed for the advancement of Christ's kingdom in the world. The preacher in the Vermont Chronicle article, "blessed God for his promise to give the kingdom of this world to Christ."[54] The Boston Recorder article described a concert conducted in the "proper mode,"

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[53] Miller, Letters, 41.

[54] Concentus, "Monthly Concert," 804.

where they, "invoke the Holy One 'to send out His light and His truth.'"[55] Miller recommended, "beseeching that the kingdom of God may come--that every obstacle to the spread of the gospel may be taken out of the way."[56] In short, the theme of concert prayer was, "thy kingdom come," the world wide spread of the Gospel being equated with the coming of Christ's kingdom.

Miller also suggested that at the monthly concert people should pray for non-Christians, "that the millions throughout the world who have never heard the glad tidings of salvation, may have them preached to them in purity and power."[57] Also, "that the pagan heart may be everywhere enlightened and softened, and the way of the Lord be prepared for the spread of his name among all nations."[58] Green suggested that prayers also be offered for the newly converted Christians in foreign lands.[59]

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55 "Monthly Concert of Prayer," Evangelical Recorder, 191.

56 Miller, Letters, 34.

57 Ibid., 34-35.

58 Ibid., 36.

59 B. Green, "Address to the Monthly Concert," 73-74.

Concert goers prayed for missionaries. The Boston Recorder article observed, "with what heavenly affection, he commends the Missionaries of the Cross to God their Redeemer!"[60] Miller suggested praying,

> that more labourers may be raised up, properly qualified, and sent forth into the great harvest; that the labourers already in the field may be protected and strengthened, and made to speak boldly as they ought to speak; and that the word of the Lord proclaimed by them may have free course and be glorified; that the beloved brethren and sisters who have left homes as dear to them as ours can be, for the sake of bearing the word of life to the benighted pagans, may be inspired with wisdom, and guided with strength, aided in every difficulty, and comforted in all their sorrows.[61]

Miller's prayer for more laborers expressed a need in the 1840s that was not present earlier. These prayers not only expressed concern for the missionaries, but recalled their dedication and sacrifice, which moved the worshipper to self-examination.

At the concert, prayers were also offered for the missionary society, other benevolent societies, and their directors. In the Vermont Chronicle description of the minister's prayer,

> He gave thanks for the system of benevolent effort to extend the gospel to every creature, which characterizes the present day. He praised God for the success which had already attended the efforts of Christian

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60 "Monthly Concert of Prayer," Evangelical Recorder, 191.

61 Miller, Letters, 34.

> benevolence. He prayed specifically for the success of each of the most prominent branches of this one great cause.[62]

Samuel Miller was more specific; he prayed, "that those who have direction and management of selecting and sending forth missionaries, and of providing means for their support, may be counselled and guided, and their work crowned with abundant success."[63] Green suggested that each prayer be for a different benevolent object,[64] and Miller emphasized that prayers at concerts could be offered for domestic as well as foreign missions.

Finally, the twelve per cent of church members at the concert prayed for what Green called "Christendom." Miller suggested prayer, "that those who call themselves Christian may feel their obligations to send the gospel to 'every creature'; . . . that the sleeping church may be roused to a sense of her duty in regard to this great concern."[65] This was also a prayer for financial support.

When the friend of mission joined her or his heart in prayers like these, what would be the result? We recall that five common beliefs about prayer, listed earlier in this chapter, had emphasized the effects on the person praying.

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62 Concentus, "Monthly Concert," 304. See also: "Monthly Concert of Prayer," Evangelical Recorder, 191.

63 Miller, Letters, 35.

64 B. Green, "Address to the Monthly Concert," 72-73.

65 Miller, Letters, 35.

(1). The act of prayer itself was an acknowledgement of the sovereignty of God. Although the supporters of missions believed in the importance of "means," they were useless without the presence of the Spirit of God. Prayers in the spirit of Miller's outline acknowledged that the "pagan heart" must be softened by God's Spirit to receive the gospel message, and mission board executives needed to be "counselled and guided" by the Lord. Human labors would have no effect unless empowered by the Spirit of God. The prayers of the concert recognized this dependence and prayed for God's blessing.

(2). Through prayer a person might experience "special discoveries of his mercy." Prayers for salvation for others reinforced the teachings of orthodoxy in the mind of the person praying, and therefore promoted a greater concern for one's own relationship with God. Meditation on the power of Christ to save every creature, could renew a person's devotion to Christ, whose sacrifice had brought salvation.

(3). Prayer was submission to God's will. In this case, God's will was known from Scripture: God's kingdom would come; the knowledge of the Lord would cover the earth as the waters cover the sea. The friends of missions submitted their wills to Christ's will when they did "feel their obligation to send the gospel," and gave sacrificially to missions.

(4). Prayer brought relief from one's cares and fears. The friends of mission often felt their concern in personal terms. Prayer for missions was

prayer for missionaries. The friend of mission knew the missionaries from reading their letters in the Missionary Herald. In many cases they knew a missionary as a relative or former neighbor. Prayer for missionaries expressed a personal concern, and gave to a person a sense of relief, that the missionary was in God's care.

(5). In prayer a person received the love of God and became more loving. Remembering in prayer the "missionaries of the Cross," was a reminder of *the* Cross and the first missionary: Jesus Christ. Thoughts of the Cross and its representatives could fill a person's heart with feelings of love. The friend of mission prayed for "every creature" of every color and every society. Through prayer, the concert attenders came to empathize with all persons and to reflect on the equality of all human beings before God.

Monthly concert goers sang about prayer in hymns like the following,

> Prayer is the soul's sincere desire,
> Utter'd or unexpress'd,
> The motion of a hidden fire,
> That trembles in the breast.
>
> Prayer is the simplest form of speech
> That infant lips can try;
> Prayer is the sublimest strains that reach
> The majesty on high.
>
> In prayer, on earth the saints are one;
> They're one in word and mind;
> When with the Father and the Son;

Sweet fellowship they find.[66]

The mystery of prayer--simple and sublime--was the mystery of communion with God. Praying for the advancement of Christ's kingdom was an act of devotion to Christ. Prayer for persons who did not yet know the love of Christ, was an act of love for one's fellow human beings. The act of prayer increased the devotion and love in the worshippers' hearts, and led to action. In the spirit of the monthly concert, Christians also had unity with each other ("In prayer, on earth the saints are one"), when they were united in prayer to God.

Hymns

Of all the elements of worship, hymns provided people with the strongest opportunity to express feelings. As David Greene and Lowell Mason (1792-1872) said in the preface to Church Psalmody, hymns are lyric poetry, and,

> All truly lyric poetry, of a religious character, has one of these two objects--either to be a channel through which the full soul may pour forth its strong and holy emotions, or to bring before the mind objects which, in their nature and aspect, are adapted to awaken these elevated emotions;--it is to express emotion or to excite it.[67]

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66 James Montgomery, "Prayer is the soul's sincere desire," in Hymns and Sacred Songs for the Monthly Concert and Similar Occasions (Andover: Society of Inquiry Respecting Missions, 1823), no. 26, vv. 1,3,5.

67 David Greene and Lowell Mason, eds., Church Psalmody: A Collection of Psalms and Hymns Adapted to Public Worship (Boston: Perkins and Marvin, 1831), iv.

The LMS had published a collection of Missionary Hymns in 1810,[68] and the Society of Inquiry at Andover published Hymns and Sacred Songs; for the Monthly Concert and Similar Occasions, in 1823. The latter, a collection of 106 hymns, included some on the "spirituality and perfections of God,"[69] which were familiar from Sunday worship. Others related to the subjects of prayer, missions, missions to specific groups, and the ordination, departure, and funerals of missionaries. The Society distributed 1,000 copies of this missionary hymnal.[70]

Collections of hymns for general use in Sunday services also included missionary subjects. In 1815 ABCFM secretary Samuel Worcester published Christian Psalmody, which included a few hymns on missions and on charitable collections. ABCFM secretary David Greene co-edited with Lowell Mason Church Psalmody. First published in 1831, it went through at least twenty-eight printings, with over 150,000 copies distributed in Greene's life time.[71] Church Psalmody included a collection of fifty-eight hymns on "Universal Diffusion of the Gospel."

The missionary hymns in use in this period expressed all of the theological themes and feelings of the movement. The Lordship of Christ was clearly expressed in one of the best known hymns by Isaac Watts (1674-1748),

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68 Review of Missionary Hymns, EM 18 (1810): 245.

69 Hymns for the Monthly Concert, vii.

70 SIA, ser. 4.4, 1 Sept. 1824.

71 Anderson, "David Greene," 327; NUC 109:253; 216:674; 367:170-72; 745:292.

Jesus shall reign, where'er the sun
Doth his successive journeys run;
His kingdom stretch from shore to shore
Till moons shall wax and wane no more.[72]

The urgency of the Great Commission was also proclaimed in song:

Go preach my Gospel! saith the Lord;
Bid the whole earth my grace receive;
He shall be sav'd, who trusts my word,
He shall be damn'd, who won't believe.[73]

Many of the hymns called on worshippers to feel disinterested benevolence to the "perishing heathen." The first hymn of the Greene-Mason section on missions alluded to a "Macedonian call,"

Hark!--what mean those lamentations,
Rolling sadly through the sky?
'Tis the cry of heathen nations,
'Come, and help us, or we die!'

Hear the heathen's sad complaining--
Christians, hear their dying cry;
And, the love of Christ constraining,

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[72] Isaac Watts, "Jesus shall reign, where'er the sun," in Christian Psalmody, in Four Parts, ed. Samuel Worcester (Boston: Samuel T. Armstrong, 1815), 41 (Psalm 72, Part II, v. 1); in Hymns for the Monthly Concert, no. 51, v. 1; in Ch Ps, 138 (Psalm 72, Part II, v. 1). Other hymns on the Lordship of Christ include: Isaac Watts, "Sing to the Lord, ye distant lands," in Chr Ps, 52 (Psalm 96, vv. 1,2); in Ch Ps, 169 (Psalm 96, Part II, vv. 1,2); "The Savior--what a noble flame," in Chr Ps, 190 (no. 172); Isaac Watts, "From all that dwell below the skies," in Ch Ps, 197 (Psalm 117, Part I); "All power is to our Saviour given," in Ch Ps, 473 (no. 511); "Now living waters flow," in Ch Ps, 485 (no. 541); Philip Doddridge, "Hail to the prince of life and peace," in Ch Ps, 485 (no. 542); Leonard Bacon, "Wake the song of jubilee," in Ch Ps, 487 (no. 546). The hymnals give incomplete information on the authorship of hymns. These notes indicate authorship of hymns wherever it can be determined.

[73] Isaac Watts, "Go preach my Gospel! saith the Lord," in Chr Ps, 101 (no. 128).

Join to help them, ere they die.[74]

Reginald Heber's (1783-1826) "From Greenland's icy mountains," often simply called "The Missionary Hymn," expressed the duty of world evangelization:

Shall we, whose souls are lighted
With wisdom from on high,
Shall we to men benighted
The lamp of life deny?
Salvation! O Salvation!
The joyful sound proclaim,
Till earth's remotest nation
Has learn'd Messiah's name.[75]

These three hymns all called forth gratitude to God and compassion for the non-Christian, who was believed to be damned without the gospel.

The millennium was alluded to, in one way or another, in most mission hymns, and directly described in several. One such millennial hymn prayed,

O Father, let thy kingdom come,
Thy kingdom, built on love and grace!
In every nation give it room,
In every heart afford it place:
The earth is thine--set up thy throne,
And claim the kingdoms as thine own.[76]

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74 "Hark!--what mean those lamentations," in Ch Ps, 464-65 (no. 489).

75 Reginald Heber, "From Greenland's icy mountains," in Hymns for the Monthly Concert, no. 54, v. 3; in Ch Ps, 465 (no. 490, v. 3).

76 "O Father, let thy kingdom come," in Ch Ps, 473 (no. 510, v. 1).

Peace was perhaps the most often mentioned particular blessing of the millennium in these missionary collections. One such hymn called forth praise for the "Prince of Peace,"

> Let saints on earth their anthems raise,
> Who taste the Saviour's grace:
> Let heathens too, proclaim his praise,
> And crown him 'Prince of Peace.'
>
> Praise him, who laid his glory by,
> For man's apostate race;
> Praise him, who stoop'd to bleed and die
> And crown him 'Prince of Peace.'
>
> Ye nations, lay your weapons down
> Let war forever cease;
> Immanuel for your sovereign own,
> And crown him 'Prince of Peace.'[77]

This hymn emphasized that the sacrificial death of Christ ("who stoop'd to bleed and die") brings peace. It made a direct link between the peace that comes in the Cross of Christ, and the laying down of weapons.

Christian unity, another mark of the millennial reign of Christ was also lauded in song:

> Let party names no more
> The Christian world o'er spread;
> Gentile and Jew, and bond and free,
> Are one in Christ their head.

77

"Let saints on earth their anthems raise," in Hymns for the Monthly Concert, no. 9, vv. 1-3. For other hymns on millennial peace see the paraphrase of Isaiah 2: 2-4, "O'er mountaintops the mount of God," in Chr Ps, 194 (no. 186), and in Ch Ps, 478 (no. 522). See also--Chr Ps, 193 (no. 183), 194 (no. 185), 195 (no. 187).

Among the saints on earth,
Let mutual love be found;
Heirs of the same inheritance,
With mutual blessings crown'd.

Let Envy, child of hell!
Be banish'd far away;
Those should in strictest friendship dwell,
Who the same Lord obey.

Thus will the church below
Resemble that above;
Where streams of pleasure ever flow
And every heart is love.[78]

This hymn expressed a Christ-centered unity, based on the headship and inheritance of Christ, and obedience to Christ.

Brotherhood--unity in Christ that overcomes racial differences--was also a mark of the millennium and the missionary movement:

From east to west, from north to south,
Emmanuel's kingdom shall extend;
And every man, in every face,
Shall meet a brother and a friend.[79]

The hymns of the missionary movement hailed all aspects of the millennium--peace, Christian unity, and brotherhood, as well as the global spread of the Christian faith. They were songs of a redeemed society as well as redeemed individuals. Christ's kingdom was coming to the earth.

Hymns for missionary meetings were common. Hymns for the Monthly Concert included eight

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[78] Benjamin Beddome, "Let party names no more," in Hymns for the Monthly Concert, no. 18.

[79] Voke, pseud., "Exert thy power, thy rights maintain," in Chr Ps, 193 (no. 182, v. 7).

hymns for missions to the Jews, one to Indians, and two to Africa. Song of missions to Africa, sung long before such a mission commenced, indicate the importance of feelings of guilt over slavery as a motive for missions. In one such hymn for Africa, Christians sang,

> And must thy brothers' hatred find
> A doom that nature never gave?--
> A curse that nature ne'er designed,--
> The fetter, and the name of slave?
>
> Haste, lift from Afric's wrongs the veil,
> Ere the eternal judge arise,
> He, who attends the pris'ner's wail,
> And counts the tears from misery's eyes.
>
> O! ere the flaming skies reveal
> That frown which none can meet and live,
> Teach her before the throne to kneel,
> And like her saviour pray,--*Forgive.*[80]

This hymn reveals a remarkable logic: Christians should seek to convert Africans to Christianity, that the African might pray to God to forgive White Christians for the sin of slavery. The Eternal Judge hears the cry of the slave, and God's wrath is prepared--only the prayer for mercy from the African will be heard!

Hymns for missions to Palestine and to the Jews were more common. The millennial expectation of the return of the Jews to the Holy Land and their conversion to Christ combined with the 'romance' of the Holy Land to add

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80 H., pseud., "Shall blest benevolence extend," in Hymns for the Monthly Concert, no. 70, vv. 4-6.

excitement. A hymn for the ordination and departure of a missionary to Palestine went as follows:

> Go, Missionary, take thy stand
> On Judah's long forsaken land;
> Go to the spot where patriarch's prayed,
> The land in which their bones are laid.
>
> Go where prophetic harps were strung,
> Where strains divine on earth were sung:
> Go where redemption's price was paid,
> And peace with heaven for man was made.
>
> Go sound aloud from Calvary
> The trump of Israel's jubilee:
> Say to her wandering exiles,--'come,
> And find in Zion still a home.'
>
> Israel shall hear; that thrilling sound
> Shall reach to earth's remotest bound,
> And gather to their holy place
> The fugitives of Jacob's race.
>
> Life from the dead that call shall be,
> Their Prince, their Saviour sets them free;
> Tho' long rejected, now receiv'd
> His word, his grace with joy believ'd.[81]

The hymns of the missionary movement acknowledged the movement's complete dependence on the Holy Spirit for success:

> Who, but thou, almighty Spirit,
> Can the heathen world reclaim?
> Men may preach--but till thou favor,

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81 "Go, Missionary, take thy stand," in Hymns for the Monthly Concert, no. 72, vv. 1-5. For other hymns relating to missions to the Jews or missions to Palestine, see: Hymns for the Monthly Concert, nos. 62-68; Ch Ps, 472-73 (nos. 507-509).

Heathens will be still the same:
Mighty Spirit!
Witness to the Saviour's name.[82]

The hymns of the monthly concert both expressed and generated deep feelings. They were feelings of devotion to Christ, and love for others. They expressed confidence in the victory of Christ and the coming millennial reign of universal faith, peace, brotherhood, and Christian unity. They expressed guilt over slavery, and a romantic attachment to the Holy Land. They expressed consecration to Christ of all one possessed. Finally, the hymns expressed total dependence on God, without whose Spirit nothing of consequence would result.

Missionary Intelligence

Samuel Worcester had observed in 1818 that reports of missionary intelligence were "among the most efficacious means of quickening the spirit of prayer."[83] Samuel Miller later complained, concerning the concert, "How can a minister and his people be expected to feel aright, or to pray aright, if they do not know the state of the missionary field?"[84]

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82 "Who, but thou, almighty Spirit," in Ch Ps, 467 (no. 495, v. 1).

83 Samuel Worcester, "Address of the Prudential Committee of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions [January 1818]," Panoplist 14 (1818): 30.

84 Miller, Letters, 39. See also: Anderson, Foreign Missions, 179.

The sharing of missionary intelligence became an increasingly important element of the concert. In 1815 the emphasis in the "Monthly Concert for Prayer for Missions" was on the word *prayer;* by 1835 the emphasis was on the word *missions.* An 1834 prize-winning essay by Ansel D. Eddy (1798-1875) on "Method of Conducting the Monthly Concert for Prayer," was devoted almost entirely to the responsibility of the pastor to communicate information about missions.[85] People still prayed at the concert. However, the success of the concert--measured in attendance, contributions, and general excitement over missions--was determined by the quality of the information shared.

Consistent with Jonathan Edwards' understanding of reason, affections, and will, the promoters of missions believed that people needed to be given the *facts* about missions; these would generate feelings expressed in prayer and song, which would result in action when the collection was taken. An 1827 article in the Religious Intelligencer, in advocating the monthly concert made just this point:

> One great reason why Christians do not *feel* more when they pray for a world of wretched sinners is, that they are in want of *facts* on the subject. . . .
>
> Present facts to a man, and if there is a Christian soul within him, *he must feel; and feeling,* he will *pray and act.*[86]

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85 A. Eddy, "Method," 388-94.

86 G., pseud., "Monthly Concert," RI 11 (1826-27): 798.

Well presented missionary intelligence could strongly affect the hearers. In a description of the October 1823 concert at Park-street Church, Boston, which appeared in Richmond's Evangelical and Literary Magazine, the correspondent reported,

> As the speaker went from place to place, I felt my bosom dilating and my affections expanding. I traveled in thought and feeling from clime to clime, rejoicing as a Christian in the wide diffusion of the blessings of the gospel.[87]

The occasional visit to a monthly concert by a missionary or native Christian was a kind-of incarnate missionary intelligence. The affecting power of such a visitor was described in the continuation of the article quoted above. When Christian Cherokee David Brown gave the benediction, he,

> thus began--'O! Lord, our heavenly father, who hast made of one blood all nations of men to dwell on the face of the earth,' &c. . . . The sentiment of the passage quoted, came upon me with overpowering force--I never felt my affinity to the family of mankind in such a way before; and I could scarcely help exclaiming, *surely, every human being is my brother!*[88]

Such experiences caused persons not only to think, but also to feel, a sense of human kinship transcending the differences of race that deeply divided American society.

Worshippers at the monthly concert sang of the reviving influence of missionary intelligence:

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87 "A Monthly Concert of Prayer," Evangelical and Literary Magazine 6 (1823): 565.

88 Ibid., 566.

Oh! 'tis pleasant--'tis reviving
To our hearts to hear, each day,
Joyful news from far arriving,
How the gospel wins its way;
Those enlightening,
Who in death and darkness lay.[89]

Missionary intelligence revived one's hope in God, and gave one joy, to know that others were discovering salvation.

However, providing the monthly concert with missionary intelligence was a difficult matter. Most parishes seldom if ever had access to a Board secretary or visiting missionary or native Christian. How could they share inspiring missionary intelligence? In 1833 the Board began publishing the Missionary Herald on a schedule such that most people would get the new month's issue in time for the monthly concert.[90] This was done so that every subscribing pastor could have the latest missionary intelligence in time for the concert. But just reading missionary news was not effective; speakers were urged to address the concert with feeling and knowledge.

In 1827 Daniel Crosby (1799-1843),[91] when pastor in Conway, Massachusetts, began using maps in his monthly concerts, attendance and

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[89] "Yes! we trust the day is breaking," in Ch Ps, 480-81 (no. 529, v. 3).

[90] "Monthly Concert and Missionary Herald," MH 29 (1833): 77.

[91] Daniel Crosby was Andover classmate and close friend of David Greene. Greene named a son Daniel Crosby Greene, and preached at Crosby's funeral. Crosby worked as editor of the Missionary Herald, 1842-43.

contributions increased significantly. In the 1830s a few other pastors developed their own techniques of constructing, suspending, and using maps, and had similar responses. At Park-street Church in Boston, a large world map was suspended on the wall behind the pulpit. The speaker used a rod six or seven feet long to point to the location of the mission being discussed. Another pastor reported,

> Constructing a slight frame, about six feet long and four wide, we stretched cotton cloth upon it, on which were drawn with India ink, the outlines of the country which was to be the subject of remark at the Concert.[92]

Later new maps on cotton cloth were placed on the old frame. Edward Hooker (1794-1875), pastor in Bennington, Vermont, reported the following experiment: "I employed a carpenter to make me a board, of light material, seven feet in length and five in breadth, and painted as pure a white as possible; with handles for carrying, and a ring by which it could be suspended."[93] Hooker then drew on the white board a map of the world, and colored with India ink all of the countries "destitute of Protestant Christianity." He suspended the board above the pulpit before the Sunday afternoon service prior to the monthly concert. The dark india ink communicated to the people the extent of the work yet to be done. Hooker later used his white board for maps of specific missions.

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[92] [Edward William Hooker], On the Use of Missionary Maps at the Monthly Concert (Boston: Crocker and Brewster, 1842), 8.

[93] Ibid., 10.

Rufus Anderson presented a paper on the use of maps to the Board's annual meeting in 1841,[94] and a tract, On the Use of Missionary Maps at the Monthly Concert, was published by the Board in 1842. The Board began publishing maps of missions in 1841, and by 1850 had produced over 18,000.[95]

The pioneer map constructors understood that the maps were not only of value in giving people more knowledge of the mission field. They also expressed the pastor's enthusiasm for missions. That enthusiasm was contagious, and directed attention to the missionary work. Pastor Crosby observed, "Where is the Pastor who does not wish his people to be familiar with the details of the missionary enterprise? If they see him interested, they will soon catch at least a portion of his spirit."[96]

The monthly concert for prayer for missions had by 1850 ceased to be a concert--each congregation observed it when they could get the most people to come. Prayer continued to be an important part of the meeting, but not as important to its success as missionary intelligence. The monthly concert was the local villager's window to the world. Using the Missionary Herald and various

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Rufus Anderson, "Use of Missionary Maps at the Monthly Concert for Prayer," AR 1841:56-58.

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All figures for publication and/or circulation of materials produced by the ABCFM are based on the reports of expenditures in the Annual Reports of the Board, which often indicated the number published.

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[E. Hooker], Use of Missionary Maps, 20-21.

books on missions, and the visual aid of maps, the pastor was expected to interpret to the worshipper the events of the world, from the perspective of a history of redemption. The pastor was to inform in such a way as to make the worshipper feel for the conversion of the world.

IV. PIETY, PRAYER, AND THE CONCERT

The monthly concert was the central institution of missionary piety. One invocation hymn for the monthly concert caught its spirit:

> Indulgent God of love and pow'r,
> Be with us at this solemn hour!
> Smile on our souls; our plans approve,
> By which we seek to spread thy love.
>
> Let each discordant thought be gone,
> And love unite our hearts in one;
> Let all we *have* and *are* combine,
> To forward objects so divine.[97]

The concert was a time to call for God's blessing. In this way the worshipper acknowledged dependence on God. It was a time for unity--unity with God--unity with the missionaries in foreign places--unity with all who named the name of Christ. It was also a time of personal consecration. The worshipper gave to the collection, and with that gift also gave one's "all" to God.

Samuel Worcester had declared the missionary movement's dependence on prayer succinctly in his 1818 "Address," "*The spirit of Missions is a spirit of*

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[97] "Indulgent God of love and pow'r," in Hymns for the Monthly Concert, no. 19.

prayer. It embraces the promises, it fixes its hopes on God. To him it constantly looks for wisdom and energy, for instruments and means, for help and success. Without prayer it cannot live."[98] Missions were the work of God and would prosper only at God's direction.

Throughout the first forty years of the American Board's history, the advocates of missions advocated prayer as a powerful motivating force in the life of the friend of mission, and in the missionary movement as a whole. The spiritual discipline of prayer nurtured the person's relationship with God, which resulted in support for missions. At the monthly concert the worshipper was renewed by the missionary spirit and received through prayer spiritual blessings from God. These spiritual blessings--a strengthened sense of dependence on God and confidence in God, and a renewed commitment to labor for Christ's kingdom--generated enthusiasm for missions, which expressed itself in financial support. Prayer was the spiritual engine of the missionary movement.

Enoch Pond (1791-1882), in one of his Monthly Concert Lectures, published in 1824, drew a connection between prayer and the attitudes of desire, interest, and doing.[99] The more one prayed for the advancement of Christ's kingdom, the more one would desire it. Pond explained, "if they pray as they

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[98] S. Worcester, "Address, [Jan. 1818]," 30.

[99] Pond, Missionary Discourses, 102-11.

ought, they *will* feel interested in exertions to promote it."[100] Prayer was also a pledge "to do whatever we consistently can"[101] for the cause. Pond was interpreting the power of prayer in terms of its effects on the person praying. Through prayer, the individual began to desire the object of prayer--the success of missions--became interested in the subject, and was moved to do something about it.

When Ezra Fisk, who had been a charter member of the Brethren at Williams College, became moderator of the Presbyterian General Assembly in 1830, he wrote a circular letter on the monthly concert. This statement emphasized that all of the benevolent efforts of the day were only instruments to produce reformation, and they would be ineffective without prayer. Through prayer, the believer acknowledged dependence on God, who alone could bring reformation.

> These . . . and all other benevolent institutions and operations, ought to be regarded simply as moral means; as *instruments* admirably fitted to produce reformation; but which notwithstanding never will produce it, on hearts naturally at enmity with God, unless he take them into his own hands, and put into them a resistless efficiency. To think otherwise, is to idolize human instrumentality; it is to put it in the place of God.[102]

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100 Ibid., 106.

101 Ibid., 107.

102 Ezra Fisk, moderator, "A Letter from the General Assembly to the Churches under Their Care, on the Subject of the Monthly Concert," Christian Advocate 8 (1830): 284.

Fisk had seen the missionary movement grow from one college student to a formidable empire of benevolence. He had been there when the movement had no money, organization, or prestige, but had faith and prayer. As missions grew in popularity, Fisk detected a tendency "to idolize human instrumentality." In a self-confident and energetic America, Fisk felt the spirit of the times could not be allowed to infect the missionary movement to the point that its piety was lost. The act of prayer was an acknowledgement of dependence on God. In such a spirit of prayer, missions had been born, and only in this spirit could missions be sustained.

Samuel Miller, in his Letters on the Monthly Concert, in 1845, made two statements that claimed a direct relationship between prayer for the advancement of Christ's kingdom, and a person's spiritual vitality:

> The more we feel and pray for our fellow-men, and, above all, the more we feel and pray for the enlargement of the Redeemer's kingdom, for the return of our revolted world to God and happiness, the more our benevolence is increased; the more we resemble our Father in heaven; and, of course, the more our own spiritual improvement and happiness are promoted.[103]

> The less our hearts are occupied about the redeemer's kingdom, the less our attention is drawn to it; . . . the less our sense of the value of the gospel, which will always be proportioned to our sympathy for those who have it not; the less religion, of course, we have, and, consequently, the less our enjoyment of it.[104]

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[103] Miller, Letters, 9.

[104] Ibid., 27.

To "resemble our Father in heaven," was the ultimate goal of prayer. Communion with God in prayer led to a unity with God--a unity of feeling, will, and action. The friend of mission grew in love for her or his "fellow-men" through prayer and the hearing of missionary intelligence. The worshipper felt more--for and with Christ--through prayer and the singing of hymns of devotion. The supporter participated in the salvific work of Christ through prayer and monetary contributions to send the heralds of Christ to all the world.