

Harrisburg November 24th 1858

To the Executive Committee of the Board of For. Missions

Dear Sirs

And aware that for some length of time I have been entertaining the purpose of offering myself to be commissioned by you as a For. Missionary, I have been delayed in taking this step on to by the uncertainty that existed as to whether I could make this offer with the purpose of taking with me a wife or going singly. As this question is at length decided I hasten to make my formal application for a Commission. The expectation which I expressed in a former letter has been disappointed. I can only offer myself to your disposal. As I presume you are only concerned about the event, I shall not, at least in this letter, enter into any explanation of how it was brought about. I feel that it is my duty to regard this decision as coming from God & to submit to it without any murmurs.

I do not suppose it is necessary for me to say much about the views or feelings that have led me to seek a Foreign field of labor. This decision has not been made hastily nor without much prayerful consideration. Nothing has ever cost me so much anxiety and perplexity of mind. Unforeseen obstacles have opposed me. I have sometimes been counseled by others to regard these as indicating that my appointed sphere of labor was at home. And often my own inclinations have powerfully seconded these arguments. But I could never bring either my judgment or conscience

to rest long satisfied in this decision. The great-work
of Soc. Missions in its vast extent & urgent importance
has been constantly before my mind, and the Providence
of God both at home & abroad has seemed to point to
this as the great-duty of the Church in these days. The
Considerations which have had the greatest influence
with me have been simply - the commands & promises
of God respecting the universal diffusion & success of
his truth - the wonderful & striking ways in which
He is opening wide doors for missionary effort - the
success which has already attended the feeble efforts
of the Church in this direction and the fewness of
the number of those who can or will go abroad.
The great-hindrance in the work of Soc. Missions, at
least so far as our Church is concerned, is the
unwillingness of young men to go, and not of the
Church to send them. Therefore, although I see
nothing in myself, in my qualifications or circumstances
which makes it my duty to go more than that of others
except this one, that I have been led by God to think
of this work & to feel often strong promptings to
engage in it, I am unable to give to my own conscience
or my God any satisfactory reason for staying at home.
It is just in this case with me - I find it a sore
trial to break the ties which must be broken when
I go - I have many doubts & fears as to my fitness &
as to how it will be with me when I get to my field
of labor, and yet I feel persuaded that the only
way left open to me, is to go. A sermon from Dr. Hodge
during my first Session at Princeton first led me to reflect

upon my duty in relation to For. Missions, and I then resolved
to examine the question seriously & prayerfully & suffer nothing
to interfere with its decision. Three years have elapsed, and
though I have not that assurance which I desire to have
yet - I am convinced that acting in the fear and for the glory
of God, I must - consent to go.

As to a field of labor my preferences are not so
decided as to incline me to urge them upon the Board.
I do not put very much confidence in my ability to judge
of my fitness for any particular post. For your information
however I will state my views & inclinations so far as they
are decided. South America has most long & occupied
my attention. From its position, it seems to me to appeal to
the American Church for the true Gospel - it has been long
overlooked and now seems to be the time at least to
begin the work - when such rapid improvements are
being undertaken to advance its interests both material
& intellectual and before infidelity & superstition
since therefore the Board have been led to think of Brazil
as a new mission field. I feel inclined strongly to-
ward it. I know that a new mission in Rio Janeiro
will probably meet with unusual difficulties and
obstacles and that I am not sufficient for such a
work, but I do not think that I am called upon to
take account of these things. I trust I do not depend on
my own strength or bridle I desire to submit this matter
to the judgment & sound discretion of the Committee. It is my
wish that you make every inquiry as to my qualifications
of every kind and exercise your better judgment in either
appointing or rejecting me for this post.

As to the general question of the propriety of establishing
this new mission when others already planted are calling
so loudly for reinforcements, it is still less for me to decide

I should not however have any difficulty in going to Brazil
so long as our Master has bidden us to preach the Gospel
to every nation & every creature - so long as Brazil is equally
open with other nations & is so destitute of a knowledge of the
way of life and so long as we know not whether this or
that planting shall prosper or both be alike good. I mean
to say that when God in his Providence has thrown open
two nations & greatly and in his Word gives the same
Command respecting them, I see little room left for
man's wisdom to exercise itself in choosing between them
as fields of labor. I should feel content to labor in
either. It is to me a joyful thought as I see in one
after another, a light being kindled in the nations of
the earth, that it is now possible with respect to them,
which was before impossible according to the plan
and purpose of God, that Christians may pray in
faith and expect that God will work there a work
of salvation. Faith cometh by hearing & hearing by the
word of God in the hands of the Gospel Ministers.

After Brazil, China has enlisted my attention.
Indeed so far as my own wishes are concerned, it
would matter little to which of these fields I was
appointed. I am anxious that my plans be perfected
as soon as possible and shall be ready to set
out as soon as the necessary arrangements can
be made. I hope therefore the Committee will take
action upon this application as soon as convenient.
As to other matters, we can confer either by letter or
as you may appoint. May the Great Head of the Church
whose servants we are, give you wisdom to do his will.
Pray for me that I may be fitted for his service in that
station to which I may be appointed.
Yours truly
A. S. Simonton