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ARTICLE I.

## THE DIACONATE.\*

The Committee appointed last year to report to the Synod, at its present meeting, on the subject of the Diaconate, respectfully present the following paper:

The Committee in taking up the subject referred to them have acted under the impression that the purpose of their appointment was not that they should attempt an exhaustive treatment of it, but should consider it in certain aspects in which either principles underlying the diaconal office may be developed, or theoretical differences be discussed, or the points indicated in which our practice is defective. Accordingly, we propose, after a brief statement of certain assumptions in reference to which there is universal agreement among us, to submit the results of our reflections under the following heads: first, The Relations of the Diaconate to the Presbyterate; secondly, The Scope of the Deacon's Functions; and thirdly, The Sphere of his Operations.

\*This paper was presented as a report to the Synod at its recent sessions at Spartanburg, and appears in the REVIEW in accordance with a request of that body. It will be observed that the report was a partial one, discussing only the first head of the general scheme of topics which it proposes to cover. The Committee were directed to submit the remainder at the next sessions of the Synod.

## ARTICLE V.

## PLANS OF CHURCH FINANCE.

At its meeting in Columbia, in October, 1877, the Synod of South Carolina appointed John B. Adger and John L. Girardeau, *Ministers*, and Thomas Thomson, *Ruling Elder*, a Committee to report to its "next meeting a plan for improving the contributions of our churches." In October, 1878, the Committee reported to Synod in session at Spartanburg church. It pleased that venerable body to express its approbation of the report and its desire to have the same spread before the churches. The manner of publication it was left with the Committee to determine. The following paper will set before the reader with sufficient exactness the views which were presented to the Synod.

At this late day, after so much has been written and said, it would seem that it ought to be admitted by all that giving to the Lord of our substance is a mode of worship divinely appointed and acceptable; also that it is not only a duty but a fruit of grace and a means of grace and also an evidence of grace, and likewise one of the sweetest privileges Christians can enjoy. Further, it would seem that all should admit that this mode of worship is to be at regular times, and by every individual, and in proportion to each one's ability. Moreover, all would allow, one might well suppose, that it is to be perfectly voluntary, and not offered grudgingly nor of necessity. And in addition to all these things, all Presbyterians may be expected to agree that, in the conduct of this worship, it is orderly and proper to use, as being divinely ordained to this business, the services of the diaconate.

It has appeared safer to say what it would seem ought to be allowed by all, rather than venture to affirm what is admitted by all. In fact, it is to be feared that there are numbers in every Presbyterian church who do not intelligently and heartily accept the idea that God can be and must be worshipped with substance, and who, therefore, are not prepared to accept all the consequences of this view as they have been now set forth. An intelligent and considerate observer can hardly fail to be impressed with the

belief that this doctrine of Scripture needs to be more fully and frequently expounded and inculcated in every one of our churches. Should the present examination result in deepening this conviction in the reader's mind, it will not have been made in vain, even though there should be a complete failure to establish any other of the positions which may be assumed.

But whilst the points named already seem to be perfectly indisputable, there are some others bearing on the subject, which are not so plain. One of these is the question whether our worship by giving is necessarily to be always in secret. Our Lord does indeed say that we must not let our left hand know what our right doeth. But so also, and in the same place, he said, we must shut our door when we pray. He was speaking there of private prayer and private charity, and not of public worship and public offerings in the great congregation. Indeed, elsewhere he himself says, "Let your light so shine, that others seeing your good works may glorify your Father who is in heaven." Manifestly, therefore, while ostentation is to be avoided, we are not required so to arrange our services of this kind as that absolute and perfect secrecy shall be secured in reference to the gifts of each person. In so far as it may be necessary for any good reason to have it known to the deacons what each person contributes, there is no sin in giving them this knowledge.

Another question is whether the current expenses of a church, as the salary of minister or sexton, the cost of fuel, lights, repairs, etc., ought to be excluded from any connexion with its benevolent givings, and never be provided for on the same plan. This is the position taken by the Rev. George Harris, of Providence, Rhode Island, in a tract of his, widely and acceptably published. But it is not clear that it is absolutely necessary to make two distinct kinds of church givings—those of benevolence and those for church debts. The items named are indeed of debt by the church; for the minister's salary, for example, is not due to him by individuals. It was the church, as such, which called and promised him a support, and to the church he very properly looks for the fulfilment of this promise. Yet the church appeals to individuals to enable it to discharge this obligation, somewhat in

the same way that the Assembly appeals to every individual member for offerings to enable its Executive Committees to discharge the Assembly's obligations. It is not clear, therefore, that the current expenses of a church must not be provided for in the same way precisely as funds for benevolent work.

At the same time there may be churches so situated, in one respect or another, as to make it convenient for them to separate their current expenses from their benevolent givings, and evidently they must be allowed to arrange the matter as may suit them best. Indeed, it is very certain that some of our churches receive no little help in the support of their ministers from persons outside of the church, who for various reasons are willing to contribute to that object and yet are not ready to give money for missions or other like church objects. And surely none should feel disposed to throw the least obstacle in the way of these outside supporters. It is infinitely preferable by every warrantable means to attract them to the church, and interest them in its support.

There is a third question: Must the public worship of God with our substance necessarily be offered on every Lord's day in every church?

In answer, many are disposed to insist that this is the only right plan. The apostle, say they, gives this to us in 1 Cor. xvi. 2, as the divine plan, and therefore it is of course universally binding. Yet it is not quite clear to all that the inspired writer did intend to lay down there a rule for all churches without regard to any difference in their circumstances. Paul says to the Corinthians, "As I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye;" but he does not say that he gives this inspired order to all churches. Had he been laying down a universal rule he would hardly have added, "And when I come, whomsoever ye shall approve by your letters, them will I send to bring your liberality to Jerusalem. And if it be meet that I go also, they shall go with me." Surely in these last words, the apostle is referring to the particular case before him; but if this portion of his directions be specific and not universal, it can hardly be insisted that the other portion conveys unquestionably a universal

and inviolable rule. And indeed, it may well be asked, Is it analogous to the free spirit of the gospel that a rule of this kind should be imposed as binding on all churches, whatever their circumstances? Were this indeed a binding rule, then whenever any church should neglect to obey it, there would be sin; and no matter what might be its liberality in other modes, it would be necessary that that church should be visited in some form or other with the discipline of the Presbytery.

Now, on the other hand, some hold that the apostles' labors naturally were at first given to cities and towns where money is apt to be in somewhat plentiful abundance and use. There, even the day-laborer as well as the richer man may be expected generally to have money in hand, at least at the close of every week. Wherever this is the case, the wisdom and efficiency of the apostle's rule are beyond question. But had it been the fact, and been known as a fact to the apostle, concerning the rural populations of that day—the country churches of other regions than Greece and Galatia—that they had no money in current circulation and no conveniently merchantable products of their labor suitable to offer for church use, can we believe that Paul would have laid on them, in such circumstances, the binding rule that they must on every Lord's day absolutely settle their accounts with God's good providence, and liberally give of what was not in their hand?

And yet the zeal of many for this as a universal divine rule, leads them to insist that somehow or other it must be enforced. One excellent minister of our Church writes thus: "Ever since I entered the ministry I have believed that all the revenues of the kingdom ought to come in from week to week by the free gifts of God's people. I have preached it and prayed it and practised it. It is God's plan, and with faith and prayer it must succeed. It is said (he continues,) that in some communities men only get money once a year. Very good. As soon as they get it let them lay by God's part, and put a portion in each of the fifty-two envelopes, and it will be there when the Lord's day comes." But one might well ask, if thus portioned out and placed inside of fifty-two envelopes to be given in every Lord's

day at church, is it *quite* certain that it would stay there? Might not some of these envelopes be stolen, burnt, or otherwise lost? Would it not be safer and every way better to give to the Lord his portion at once? Is it not really the Lord's as soon as laid by for the Lord, and may it not, therefore, be well placed at once in the Lord's treasury? Or, will it be said that it is more acceptable to God, given in weekly portions through the coming year, than paid over all at once as soon as obtained? Is there, indeed, any weight or value in the good brother's idea that all the revenues of the kingdom must come in from week to week? Is that really the divine plan and the only acceptable plan?

Let us now take up for consideration some of the plans in present use, and compare them one with the other.

1. There is a plan pursued in many congregations for raising the pastor's salary, which we may call

#### THE SUBSCRIPTION PLAN.

It usually has in view no other object than the one named. When a call is about to be made for a minister, a paper is circulated, and every subscriber promises such a share of the salary as he is willing to pay. This plan certainly has some merits. But one very great objection to it is that it frequently is understood as a mere personal promise of the individual and for the time. The minister called is (erroneously in all ordinary cases) considered as having examined the names and amounts on that paper, and as forming his own conclusions as to the *goodness*, in a financial sense, of each of the subscriptions; and if he sees fit to accept the call fortified by these individual subscriptions he does it at his own risk. In the course of time, some die, some remove, and some see fit to withdraw from the engagement with or without notice given, and some again just neglect or decline to pay what they promised. But it is an individual affair; the church does not hold itself responsible for the amount stipulated in the call or for any definite amount whatever. When individuals draw out, it is the preacher's loss, and the church has nothing to say or to do in the premises. Thus comes about an irregular and insufficient support of the minister, and a consequent diversion of time, thought, and effort on the minister's

part from his proper work of winning souls. And thus comes about that most fatal trouble in a church—the *getting behind in settling with its minister*. Who likes to pay for dead horses? For his back services past and gone, who likes to be called upon to make up deficiencies in the pastor's salary? The church that gets into debt to its minister is in a bad way, even though it is for a small amount and has been only for a short time; if the debt is large and old, the church may be said, in a sense, to be on the road to ruin. There is only one way to save it—a very bad way, but in the noble disinterestedness of our ministry a somewhat common way—and that is for the generous man of God to forgive the debt, if his family does have to suffer.

2. There is

#### THE PEW RENT PLAN.

This also is a plan for raising the minister's salary. But as it contemplates no other object, let us pass it by.

3. There is the plan of

#### WEEKLY COLLECTIONS BY THE BAG.

Many congregations in cities and towns have adopted this plan, using the bag or hat or basket passed around. In a great many cases it has worked well. We personally know of some where it has proved itself in the highest degree efficacious. Sometimes it has proved a failure, because of a prejudice with individuals against a bag thrusting itself before them at church for money. Yet we know of one case in a Southern city, and that immediately after the war in the midst of great suffering and distress, where this plan was successfully employed, a forenoon collection being raised in this way for benevolent or foreign objects, and then an afternoon collection for current or home expenses; and both collections were ample. Let it be observed that the forenoon collection, which might well be expected to be the larger one, was given to benevolence, the afternoon collection to home objects, which illustrated the spirit of the scriptural injunction for every man to look not upon his own things, but to regard primarily the interests of others. It should be stated that in this case there never was employed any urgency of appeals or any pressing

application for money ; only the preacher frequently and earnestly held forth to the view of the congregation the greatness of Christ's sacrifice made for us. Here lies the potent influence which alone can draw forth the Church's liberality. In the case of this church of poor suffering Confederate people, as in that of the Macedonians mentioned by Paul, "in a great trial of affliction, the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality." It was "the joy of the Lord" which constituted their "strength," making them richly liberal even in deep poverty. It was their being made "to know the grace of Christ. that, though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich"—it was this which wrought in them, although in distress and want, an abounding charity to others. It was an earnest ministry, at once enlightening their understanding and stirring their affections, which made them forget their own troubles in caring for others yet more needy and distressed. It was also the power of the litanies, and the influence of frequent collections, and the effect of letting all have the opportunity at all times to worship the Lord with offerings of substance, small perhaps, but numerous and oft recurring, and so swelling into a great and ample volume. Great is the power of grace, but great also the advantage of good plans over bad ones. This is a good plan in many places. It gives every one an opportunity to offer. It passes no one by. It comes again and again to each person in God's house and accepts from every one, great and small, his willing tribute to the King. But still, in rural congregations generally this plan can hardly be expected to be efficient, because there, very commonly, the people have not much money in hand all the year round. They cannot all give weekly in proportion as the Lord prospers, because their returns are for the most part annual. The plan of weekly collections in the bag may bring in some little gifts from some of them, but to get at such congregations successfully some other plans must be substituted for, or at least conjoined with, this plan. For it is a demoralising thing in any congregation to see many persons decline to give—a very demoralising thing it is for this blessed ordinance of worshipping God with offerings of money to be visibly



(though perhaps it may be excusably) dishonored in pew after pew as the deacons go round! Yes, a dreadful thing it is for our children to grow up habituated every Lord's day to the sight of what certainly must look like the Church's trampling on her Lord's ordinance!

#### 4. There is

##### THE PLAN OF LADIES' ASSOCIATIONS.

This has been very successful in raising funds for Foreign Missions. There are not over one hundred and ninety of these in all our nineteen hundred churches—not more than one in every ten of our churches. Yet they have given one-fifth of our whole Foreign Missionary contributions for the past two years. This is a remarkable showing. It was not reasonable to calculate that these few women associated together thus would give one-tenth of all our whole Church gives, but lo, they give one-fifth of the whole sum. And yet perhaps in no case does the Ladies' Missionary Association in a church combine the strength of even all its female members! What is the secret of the power of these Associations? Multiply their number tenfold, and put one in every church of our whole connexion, and the Foreign Missionary fund of the body would be by them alone doubled immediately. And how would this result come about? What is the process by which they multiply Missionary funds? There is no mystery about it. Systematic giving of a small sum by a number of persons is the whole secret. It is just the power of the littles. The ladies promise each of them a certain sum—and it is usually a small one—every month. There needs no machinery—only a Treasurer to receive and forward the offerings. A missionary lecture by the pastor is given at the monthly meeting, and thus the members learn to know what is doing by the Church through missionaries, and also to pray for the spread of the gospel amongst the heathen.

Now what should hinder the uniting of all the members of any church and of all our churches, in this kind of systematic giving for Missions and learning about Missions and praying in concert for their success? There is no charm of course in the union of one sex by itself in this blessed work. Why should we need a

*Ladies' Missionary Association?* Why not all the church members, old and young, male and female, be associated *as such* in this giving of money systematically for Missions? And if for Missions, why not for every one of the Church's objects? And this done, whether the gifts were large or small, the treasury would be full. And this done, all would be accomplished which our hearts desire, and the Sacramental Host would march to assured and speedy victory.

5. Some have endeavored to get a contribution from every church member for one or more church objects by using in various ways a *written pledge*.

In some churches in New England a card is left at every house for each and every member of the family, and the receiver, if willing, puts down so much pledged by him as a daily contribution, from one cent up to any higher figure, and the cards are all sent back to the proper person. Then collectors are appointed to go and gather the promised amounts every month. We Presbyterians should do all this through our divinely appointed Diaconate. This plan has proved very effective. In country churches who work on this plan, it is arranged that those who are farmers may pay in any sort of produce at the market price, some merchant being selected as receiver, who sells the produce on the church's account. This is one way of employing the written pledge.

Here is another: in a little church in South Carolina Presbytery a paper is circulated by the deacon amongst the members, which has a column for every one of our Assembly's schemes, and for other objects of the individual church, and every person is requested to set down in each column such contribution, however small, as he or she feels able to pledge. The result is very much larger contributions than that little church ever before made. The secret of this success is just the power of the littles—the mighty influence of systematic and universal giving.

There is yet another form of written pledge suggested in *The Missionary* for October. It is headed

*Deacons' List of Contributions to Benevolent Objects for the year  
1879, in the Presbyterian Church.*

	\$	cents.
Sustentation, to be paid in January,		
Publication, to be paid in March,		
Foreign Missions, to be paid in May,		
Invalid Fund, to be paid in July,		
Evangelistic Fund, to be paid in September,		
Education Fund, to be paid in November,		
Theol. Institute, Tuskalooosa, to be paid in Dec'r.		

It is suggested that about the first of December\* a full statement be made to the church in regard to these matters and the plans of our Assembly; that two copies of the Deacons' List be furnished to every member of the church, old and young, male and female, both to be filled up, one to be retained and the other given back to the deacons; that at the appointed time each collection be taken up, the members bringing or else sending in their offerings, name attached; that the deacons keep precise accounts and inform the congregation statedly through the Session of the results attained.

Now it will be observed that here are three forms of using the written pledge, but none of these contemplate weekly collections. The New England plan of cards and collectors looks to monthly gatherings; and the little South Carolina church plan looks to gathering the gifts pledged, at no stated times, which is certainly a great defect in that plan; and the plan proposed in our *Missionary* for October looks for payments to be made once in every two months.

6. But we come at length to speak of one form of using the written pledge which distinctly contemplates weekly offerings and those on the Lord's day, and as a formal act of divine worship. It is known as *the envelope plan*. The Rev. George Harris, before mentioned, claims that this plan was introduced

\*There is no reason why this plan should not be introduced at any period of the year.

by the Union church of Providence, Rhode Island, which is certainly, we think, a mistake. He says that church adopted it in 1873, while we are confident that we met the envelope system in some form before that time in Mr. Spurgeon's Tabernacle, London. Possibly some of the many Americans who saw it there used, brought back the idea to this country, or it may have been known before in the United States. Mr. Harris says, "The merit of this plan lies in the annual pledge of a weekly offering." As he sets forth the plan, cards are left before the beginning of a new year\* in every pew, stating the objects had in view, and a column of figures, from one cent up, representing a weekly offering, and each person is requested to cross out the figure which represents the sum he pledges to give every week. These cards are to be dropped the next Sunday into the boxes at the church, and then fifty-two small envelopes are sent to each person pledging, and every envelope has printed on it the date of each successive Sunday in the year. The envelopes are numbered each several pack with its own particular number, (say *sixty* or *twenty-three* or some other figure,) and as they come in a check is made against their corresponding figure in the Treasurer's books, who keeps his accounts with numbers and not names, and so there is no parade made of donors' givings. Into one of these envelopes every Sunday the amount pledged is to be enclosed, and it is dropped into the box as the person enters the church. If he has been absent one or more Sundays, his little pack of envelopes remind him of it—he sees that some have not been used and he encloses the money and drops them in.

In some churches the envelopes are not dropped into a box, but gathered during the service, either whilst the congregation sings, or else keeps profound and thoughtful and reverential silence. And after the collection is made, the minister in a short offertory prayer beseeches the Head to accept and acknowledge these gifts with his blessing. In other churches, the practice is for this prayer to precede the collection, and then it becomes a prayer of special consecration of the offerings about to be made.

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\*The New Year having now already begun, there is no difficulty in entering on this plan at any subsequent period.

In such cases the minister prays that the people may give thoughtfully and intelligently, and that the Lord's blessing may follow what they thus set apart to his service. No mere formal petition is suitable, of course, but a glowing, heartfelt, touching prayer, in which every pious heart would join, and which would instruct and impress every observer and every hearer. The interests involved are unspeakably great—they are connected with the extension of the kingdom; and the gifts are especially sacred in many cases, devised by generous, loving hearts, procured by toil and self-denial; and surely, as has been well said, very, very tender should be the spirit of the occasion when the offering is made. But, it is to be feared that money very often is thoughtlessly, nay, perhaps unwillingly, cast into the Lord's treasury, no higher promptings moving the giver (as it has been well said) than when he tosses a nickel to an organ grinder in the street. A consecrating prayer by the minister before the collection would surely add not a little to the solemnity and devout seriousness of our worship with substance.

The financial success of the envelope system has, in many cases, been very decided. In one church it raised the collections in one year from \$479 to \$1,686, and the year after to \$2,397; in another church in one year from \$3,540 to \$5,064; in another from \$3,600 to \$7,674. These churches are all in Providence, Rhode Island. In one of them the number of givers was increased by the envelope system from sixty-two, which was the largest number called on by collectors, to one hundred and eighty-seven and then to two hundred and ten; in another of these churches from ninety-five to two hundred and eighty-three.

And then there are other advantages of this system :

1. It is entirely free of all personal solicitation, which is perhaps an unmixed evil, for it is fatal to a genuine benevolence to give only on persuasion. In fact, there are some who go so far as to say that it is a shame to send any person, young or old, male or female, upon any begging errand.

2. It removes elements of uncertainty: on a rainy Sunday one-half the people will not come out, but the envelopes will bring their offerings on the next clear day.

3. It secures the small gifts which readily swell into a large volume. For nine persons in ten, who live in cities or towns, it is easier to give twenty-five cents per week than to give thirteen dollars once a year—easier to give one dollar a week than fifty-two dollars at the end of the year. If fifty-eight persons in a city congregation give five cents a week, the amount in one year will be \$150.80, but if a deacon sets out to collect such an amount for any church object whatever, he is very apt to feel and say, "I do not know where I can find givers enough to contribute it." If fifty persons give ten cents a week, the sum total will be \$260—just think of it—*two hundred and sixty-five dollars in ten cent pieces!* If thirty-three persons give each twenty-five cents a week together they pile up annually \$429.00. And these several amounts, contributed in small gifts ranging from five cents to twenty-five cents, will count up annually \$839.80. Great is the power of the littles! Nine-tenths of this amount, moreover, is clear gain, for very little of the sum accumulated by these small gifts would have been gathered into occasional collections. A capital mistake in our collections commonly is, that we get from the few but not from the many. The Roman Catholics build their grand cathedrals with gifts of laboring men and servant girls. Their exactions may sometimes prove oppressive, but the principle on which they proceed is the correct one for all church-givings—we want the gifts of the many, of all the multitude, whether large or little, the gifts of the whole body in one, and we want these gifts at regular and short intervals.

4. It invites every one to give as God hath prospered him, that is, according to his or her own ability, whether great or small. It invites each to make no account of what others do or leave undone. It invites each to deal in this matter personally and in a private way directly with the Lord. It invites each to pay conscientious worship to him of a kind which he has directly appointed.

5. It trains the children to give systematically and on principle. One reason why the members of our churches generally give so little is, that they *do not know how* to give more, and that because they were never trained to give. In no one affair of

human life is the effect of training more manifest than in this matter of giving. One Christian or one church will with great delight give largely and enjoy it as an unspeakably sweet privilege; another gives as if it were the drawing of teeth; and the difference between the two is simply a matter of training. Dr. Smyth of Charleston, thirty-five years ago had a Juvenile Missionary Society in the Second church of that city, and the children brought in a really large amount of money in the course of years for Foreign Missions. But the main point gained was his education of these children in the love of Missions by the lectures with which he constantly enlivened and enlightened their meetings, as well as by their individual efforts. He trained those children to be zealous for Foreign Missions, and therefore for every good work. Those juvenile friends of Missions are now the members of the office-bearers of that congregation, and they know all about giving and therefore it comes easy to them. Their old minister sleeps in his grave there, but his living, active influence survives.

One of the pastors of the South Carolina Presbytery tells of a church member saying in his presence, "Why, I gave ten cents for Foreign Missions three times last year!" How much education in giving, think you, had that person enjoyed? But another minister of the same Presbytery hearing this statement, remarked that there are hundreds of our church members who could not boast of giving even that much! Astounding comment on a statement which no well-trained Christian could regard otherwise than as both surprising and ridiculous, "Why, I gave ten cents for Foreign Missions three times last year!" But what will the reader think when we tell him that still another minister of the same Presbytery spoke on the same occasion of an intelligent and generally zealous ruling elder, who said to him, "If all the money expended by the Church on missionary work in heathen lands had been employed in building railroads amongst them, more good would have been accomplished"—which signified, of course, that the Lord Jesus (may he graciously forgive the unworthy sentiment) should not have said, "Go, preach and teach the gospel," but, "Go, build railroads"!

The simple truth is, that we must train the next generation to be better givers, and, in every other respect, better church members. We need a better article of members, deacons, elders, ministers; and the way to get them is by rightly training them from the beginning.

It should be stated, in explaining the envelope system, that it is distinctly expressed on the cards employed that should the person pledging discover at any time during the year that his offerings are too large for his means, he is to be at perfect liberty to make the necessary reduction, only notifying the Treasurer of the change.

It should also be stated, that where contributors make no specific apportionment of their offerings, it will be for the Session to divide out the same according to its best judgment.

It should yet further be said, that our Committee of Publication at Richmond will, at low prices, furnish any church with envelopes and other papers explanatory of their use.

Once more, it is to be very especially observed, that all agree in recommending the greatest thoroughness of explanation to the congregation wherever this system is proposed to be introduced. The Rev. Dr. Lane, of our church at Athens, Georgia, before entering on the use of this plan in his church, preached several sermons on giving as a required act of worship. "I do not think (he says) that the plan can successfully be put in operation without first thoroughly discussing the whole subject." Another high authority says: "The thoroughness with which the matter is presented at first will have influence for years; and no time, consideration, or labor should be spared in its inauguration. After a proper presentation of it from the pulpit, let the officers of the church prepare a careful and ample estimate of the amount necessary to meet all the working expenses of the church, including the Sunday-school, and then convene the congregation and lay it before them, that they may act intelligently in providing for these expenses, as well as in contributing for the benevolent objects of the church." This distinction between the working expenses and the benevolent objects of the church is a necessary and proper one. There is no benevolence in providing ourselves with a house



of worship and a minister and sexton, and with fuel and lights, nor in carrying on a good Sunday-school for our children; the benevolent work of the church relates to those outside of the church, and perhaps far off at the ends of the earth.

There is one aspect, however, in which objection might be urged against this envelope plan, namely, that it seems at first sight to be calculated only for members of the church, leaving all the non-communicants aside, making no application for help to them, and using no efforts to interest them in the benevolent work of the church. But it does not appear, on more thorough consideration, that this neglect of the outsiders is any necessary part of the system. We do not see why application for offerings to the Lord may not properly and suitably be made to all such persons as are diligent in attending upon the "common ordinances;" that is, those ordinances which people come together to enjoy *in common*. Let them signify, as the members of the church do, what they are willing to pledge of their substance to the Lord by the use of the envelopes. It may be that, through grace from on high, the giving of their substance may help them to give themselves to the Lord. Let us in every proper way attract them to the church.

Thus has been presented to the reader a somewhat full exhibition of the envelope system which is now accepted in very many churches of cities and towns, as beyond all comparison the best plan for their church collections. One eminent minister of our Church says: "It is the plan of plans for raising church revenues." Another commends it as "bringing every believer face to face once every week with the Lord, to settle the question, How much do I owe him?" Already one has been quoted who says that he "has long been satisfied that all the revenues of the kingdom ought to come in from week to week by the free gifts of God's people," and that "this is God's plan, and with faith and prayer must succeed." And yet, let the impressive words of the Rev. George Harris of Rhode Island be recalled to mind, who truly says, as already quoted: "The merit of this system resides, however, in the annual pledge of a weekly offering." It cannot be gainsaid, therefore, that with all its acknowledged

efficiency, this plan does not literally nor fully comply with the apostle's injunction to the Galatians and Corinthians. The laying by as God hath prospered each one, the apostle said to those churches, must be done *on every Lord's day*—that is, strictly from week to week, with their varying circumstances, all along through the whole year. He did not enjoin the pledge at the year's beginning, of a fixed amount for each successive week, as the admirable and very efficient envelope plan proposes and requires. The question is therefore raised here again, Is there any weight or value in the idea that all the revenues of the kingdom must come in from week to week? Is that really the divine plan to the exclusion of all other plans, and are our offerings acceptable to God upon no other system?

7. There remains one other plan to be considered. It does not literally comply with the apostle's directions to the Galatians and Corinthians. It contemplates the formal offering of substance to the Lord in worship chiefly once in the year. It is a plan suited especially to rural congregations. It proposes that every such congregation associate itself under its own deacons in some sort of voluntary agreement to raise different kinds of produce for the church's objects—each man signing a written agreement to cultivate for the service of the church, ten acres, or five, or three, or two, or one acre, or a half acre, or a quarter acre, in cotton or rice or corn or wheat or barley or oats, as might suit him best; and each woman dedicating, in the same formal and solemn way, all she can make by manufacturing a carpet or a quilt, or by the care of so many turkeys or geese or ducks or hens; and each child promising what can be produced by a beehive, or a bed of potatoes in the garden, or a patch of pindars, or an apple tree, or a peach tree, or the care and feeding of a pig or lamb or kid. On a given day the results might all be gathered at some central house in the congregation, or some store in the neighboring village, or wherever it could be most conveniently gotten to a market; or, all these articles being turned by each person into money, the proceeds might be brought thus together, and then the elders and deacons divide it out between

their own church's objects and the Assembly's seven schemes. Who can doubt that in some such way as this, larger results would be attained in our country churches, than their subscriptions and collections do ever now reach? And might not other advantages accrue to these churches besides this development of their financial strength? More zeal and more devotion to the church's interests; a closer union of the whole body in hearty sympathy and mutual good will; a great deal of pleasure in the very cares and labors required; a great deliverance from the burden which the collection of money for the church's use now constitutes and imposes; an agreeable escape from many disastrous failures and break downs in our church financial undertakings; a valuable training of ourselves and our children in working directly for the Lord in our daily avocations; a pious sense of our dependence upon him for all success, since without his rain and dew and sunshine no crops and no produce are possible—might not all these advantages flow to our rural congregations from some such plan as this, in addition to the large increase of their benevolent contributions?

The ground on which this plan is proposed for the adoption of rural congregations, is that for the most part they get their money once a year, when their fall crops are sold. If they are to give as God has prospered them, they must give out of these annual receipts. The money which in small amounts they do frequently receive all through the year is not an adequate sum from which the Lord's share can be apportioned. But the farmer and planter can daily and weekly worship the Lord with their substance and their strength, as they cultivate his crop on their consecrated ground; and their "God's acres" may thus minister all the season through to their increase in faith, and their growth in zeal and love.

It has indeed been suggested by an Oconee farmer, who is a ruling elder, that there are two seasons in the year when the agricultural class of church members may be successfully called on to give money: in the fall, when cotton is sold, the farmer has the most money; but in the spring, also, he generally has some wheat or corn or other produce left, which he can sell.

And so this farming elder urges that, as we have two meetings of Presbytery in the year, we may make demands before the spring meeting for the farmers' offerings for Sustentation and Publication, which are the appointed objects for January and March; and then, before the fall meeting of Presbytery, (or at least before the Synod's meeting, when Presbytery can always have an adjourned meeting,) we can call on him for his offerings on behalf of Foreign Missions and the Invalid Fund, the Evangelistic Fund, Education, and the Tuskalooosa Institute.

8. In conclusion, reference may be made to what a young brother in the ministry in the North Carolina Synod writes as to a plan by which he was enabled to wake up the benevolence of one of his churches there, so that their gifts were increased from fifty dollars to four hundred and fifty dollars in a comparatively short period. He went to the tax records, and ascertained what every one paid to the State. Then he found out, by patient inquiry, what each one paid for his own gratification with tobacco and cigars. And then he persuaded every one, in a private conversation, to compare with these expenditures for the State and for luxury, what he was doing for Christ and the Church.

J. B. A.

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There may properly be appended to this article the resolutions which embodied the action of the Synod after consideration of the subject thus presented to it.

*Resolved*, by the Synod of South Carolina—

"1. That it be urged on every minister to instruct his people, and every evangelist the feeble congregations to which he ministers, in the Scripture doctrine of the worship of God with substance. On this subject, it is necessary in every one of our churches to give line upon line, precept upon precept. And our Sessions and evangelists are called upon to give opportunity in the best possible manner, whatever that may be, to all our churches, for offering to our adorable Head the worship under consideration.

"2. That for our churches in cities and towns this Synod recommends the envelope or some similar plan of weekly collections in order that the unquestionable advantages of frequent, systematic, proportionate, and universal offerings may be gained under the guidance of Apostolic

wisdom in all those churches where that method can be successfully employed.

"3. That for rural congregations which cannot depend on the envelope or any other system of weekly collections, we recommend the combined use of several plans. The Synod would favor the trial in such churches of the plan of agricultural and such like undertakings as detailed in the report just presented. But where persons have a repugnance to such plans, it is recommended to our country churches to have them invited to employ the written pledge of money. The deacons can make a list of all the Assembly's objects, adding to them, if thought advisable, those objects which concern immediately the local church, and persons may be asked to give a written promise to contribute a certain sum at stated periods. The written pledge, in some one or other of the forms suggested in the report, is very important to be secured in order to give efficiency to collections in such churches as cannot follow out Paul's directions to the Galatians and Corinthians. The tribute to our King must be taken from every one of his liege subjects in proportion to the prosperity vouchsafed by Him.

"4. Regarding associations of ladies and others in efforts to raise money for the work of Foreign Missions, in which they have certainly been very efficient, it may be said that they simply constitute an attempt to unite the churches where they have been established, in systematic giving by each and every member for that object, and then going on in the same track to interest and unite them in collecting money for every other church object. But where such associations exist, or may be formed, measures should always be taken to have them come under the acknowledged rule of the church, by their submitting regular reports of their doings and securing the approbation of the same by the Sessions; because the Synod is properly and rightfully jealous of every plan which does not contemplate direct and immediate action by the church *as such*, and under direct and acknowledged responsibility to the ruling eldership *as such*. Let us call on our churches, in their church capacity to contribute their offerings at stated times in those ways which seem most practicable, instructing them about Foreign Missions and all the other interests of the Church, and appealing always to that great motive—the love which we owe to Him who bought us with His blood."