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THE
PRINCETON REVIEW.

JANUARY, 1866.

No. I.

ART. I.—*Sustentation Fund.*

AT the recent meeting of the Synod of New Jersey, the Rev. Samuel J. Baird, D. D., as chairman of a committee appointed a year ago, presented an elaborate report on the subject of "unemployed ministers." One reason assigned for the fact that so many ministers, well qualified for the sacred office, were destitute of regular employment, was the insufficiency of support. Many of them had been forced to leave their fields of labour because they could not sustain themselves and families upon the salaries which they received. As the truth of this statement could not be denied, it naturally gave rise to the inquiry, What could be done to meet the difficulty, and to secure to every faithful minister devoted to his work an adequate support? The importance of this question and its bearing on the interests of individuals and of the church, secured for it the earnest consideration of every member of the Synod. In the course of the discussion which arose on this subject, reference was made to the attempt originated in 1847 to secure the adoption of the plan of a general sustentation fund analogous to that which had been so successfully carried out in the Free Church of Scotland. In that year, James Lenox, Esq., of New York, caused to be printed a pamphlet on Church Economics by the late illustrious Dr. Chalmers, a copy of which was sent to every

minister in our church. The sermon before the General Assembly which met May, 1847, in Richmond, Virginia, was devoted to a recommendation of that plan. In the *Princeton Review* for July, 1847, the same scheme was pressed upon the attention of the church. All these efforts proved powerless. They produced no sensible impression. When, however, the same views were presented to the Synod they met with immediate and general approbation, and that body resolved to memorialize the next General Assembly in favour of the adoption of the plan of a sustentation fund. This resolution, we believe, was adopted by an unanimous vote.

The subject was presented to the last General Assembly in an overture from the North River Presbytery, drawn up by the Rev. J. K. Wight. This overture proposed the plan of separate presbyterial sustentation funds; each presbytery being expected to take measures for raising the salaries paid by the feebler churches up to a given standard. The obvious objections to this plan are, 1. That it cuts off the distant, small, and feeble presbyteries from the abounding resources of those which are more numerous and wealthy. 2. It throws the burden of self-support after all on those who are least able to bear it, and effectually prevents the progress of the church towards, and beyond its extremities. Another overture on the same subject was presented to the Assembly from the Presbytery of Indianapolis. It was hardly to be expected that the Assembly could favourably entertain these propositions in the state of the country and of public feeling then existing. The subject was therefore laid aside, with the expression of the judgment of the Assembly, that the object aimed at by these overtures is desirable, and referring to "the unsettled condition of the country," as the reason why it was deemed inexpedient "to adopt measures at present to raise a special sustentation fund by collections in the churches for that object." At the last meeting of the Synod of New York this subject occupied the attention of that body, and a committee of fifteen was appointed to prepare a report to be made at the next meeting.

The facts above mentioned indicate that the mind of the church is awake to the importance of this subject, and is in a favourable state for its consideration. We, therefore, hope

that the following exhibition of the principles and facts which should control our action in this matter, may not prove altogether useless. As God has ordained the preaching of the gospel to be the great means of salvation, and has appointed a class of men to be devoted to that work, and expressly declared that those who preach the gospel should live by the gospel, the duty of providing for the support of the ministry has been recognized in all ages and in all parts of the church. The great practical question has ever been, How can this duty be most advantageously performed? Our limits will not admit of an enumeration of the different methods which have in fact been adopted, much less of any attempt to exhibit their comparative advantages and disadvantages. In this country we are shut up to one or the other of two plans. First, we may throw the responsibility upon the particular congregation of which the minister is the pastor; or, second, we may make the support of the ministry of the church the common duty of the whole church.

The former of these plans has been generally acted upon by Presbyterians in this country from the beginning. It has become so familiar, and regarded so much as a matter of course, that it will probably be a long and difficult process to convince the people that it is not the best or the most righteous plan. It is so obviously unjust and unreasonable, and so out of analogy with the action of the church in other matters, that it has never been adhered to with strictness or uniformity. From the earliest periods of our history we were accustomed to send out missionaries to destitute portions of the church, supported by a general contribution from the church as a whole. And in later times we have made it the duty of the Board of Missions to supplement the salaries of the pastors of feeble congregations in every part of the land. This, as far as it goes, is a recognition of the right principle, and has been the means of incalculable good. Hundreds of churches have been organized, and hundreds more have been cherished until they have become not only self-supporting, but able to aid in sustaining others. But it is obvious, and almost universally admitted, that this mode of operation does not accomplish all that is desirable and obligatory. It leaves a very large proportion of our ministers

to suffer under the greatest privations. They are subjected not only to great self-denials, but to a course of life which is injurious to their health, and to that of their families. Females, delicately brought up and encumbered with the care of children, are obliged to do all their own household work. The children themselves are deprived of the advantages of education, and the minister is either harassed and broken down, or he is forced to turn his attention to secular affairs in order to gain the necessaries of life. If a fair and full statement of the sufferings of a large class of the most faithful of our ministers could be presented to the church, it would fill every heart with shame and sorrow. Our present system not only works this great injustice to the ministers, it is no less unjust and injurious in its operation on the people. A poor man who desires the preaching of the gospel for himself and family, is obliged to pay a larger portion out of his daily earnings than the wealthy members of our flourishing churches. It is a far greater burden for some congregations to raise two or three hundred dollars for their pastors, than for others to raise five or six thousand. The present system throws the burden on those least able to bear it.

But the greatest evil of our present plan is that it cripples the energy of the church, and prevents its progress. Churches begun and cherished for a while are abandoned; promising fields are neglected, and to a large extent the poor have not the gospel preached to them. Hundred of thousands in our cities and in every part of the land, are as ignorant almost as the heathen, and they must so continue, and their children after them, so far as we are concerned, if our present plan be persisted in. It is the crying sin and reproach of the Presbyterian Church that it does not preach the gospel to the poor. It cannot do so to any great extent or with real efficiency, if the preacher is to be supported by pew-rents, or by the contributions of those to whom he preaches. What provision have we for preaching to the destitute? How many missionaries have we at home sustained as are our foreign missionaries, independently of those to whom they carry the news of salvation? How is it in New York, Philadelphia, or Baltimore? How is it with large districts in our country where a Presbyterian minister

is never seen? It is plain that on our present plan the people by thousands must perish for lack of knowledge, and if other churches were to act on our principles, the gospel would become a luxury, confined almost exclusively to the wealthier classes of the people. We do not think that these facts can be disputed. Nor is it possible for conscientious, Christian men, to look them in the face, and not feel humbled and convinced that something must be done to rescue our church from this reproach, and to enable her to do her part in preaching the gospel to all people.

The great thing, as we believe, to be accomplished is, to bring Presbyterians to feel and acknowledge before God, that the obligation to support those who are called to the ministry is the common duty of the church as a whole. It is not enough that a congregation supports its own pastor, it is not less bound to see that others of their fellow-sinners have the benefits of a Christian church. That the support of the clergy of a church is the common duty of that church as a whole is plain,

1. Because the command of Christ to preach the gospel to every creature is given to the whole church. This is the grand design for which the church was instituted. It was to teach all nations. It was to bear witness to the truth among all people. It was to bring men everywhere to the obedience of the faith, to make them the sincere worshippers and followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, and thus advance his kingdom on the earth. This is what the church exists for. If she neglects this work, and in proportion as she neglects it, she fails of her mission. And any plan of operation which hinders her in the discharge of this great and primary duty ought to be rejected or modified. There can therefore be no greater mistake than for our wealthy congregations to suppose that they discharge their duty in securing the preaching of the gospel to the people of this land when they support their own pastor, and leave others to do as they can. If the church as a whole is bound to see that the gospel is preached to the people of China and India, why is it not bound to see that it is preached to the people of Minnesota and Iowa? The heathen are unwilling, and, in many cases, unable, to support the missionaries of the cross, and therefore we feel bound to send them the gospel. If any portion of the

people of this land are unwilling or unable to sustain the messengers of Christ, we are bound to do it for them, to the extent of our ability. This clearly follows from the command of Christ.

2. It is not every member of the church who is called to preach the gospel. The call to the ministry is a distinct call, given to some and not to others. Christ constituted different offices, making some apostles, others prophets, others evangelists, others pastors and teachers. As the body has its organs each with its appropriate functions, so the church has its organs by which, as the body of Christ, it has to discharge its great duty in the world. What the body would be without hands, feet, and eyes, that the church would be without its divinely constituted officers. The gospel, the apostle teaches us, is designed for all men and necessary for their salvation. Men cannot be saved without faith; but they cannot believe without hearing; and they cannot hear without a preacher, and how can they preach, he asks, except they be sent. It is therefore the church's duty to send preachers to all those who it is the will of God should hear the gospel. To send is not merely to say, Go. That would be easy work. It would give the church no part in the self-denial, the glory, and blessedness of promoting the kingdom of Christ in the world. When the government sends ambassadors, or an army, it sustains them. When men send labourers into the field they give them their hire. And where that is withheld, its cry enters into the ears of the Lord of Hosts. In like manner when the church sends forth ministers or missionaries, to discharge, as her organs and officers, the work Christ has given her to do, the church is bound, by the clearest of all obligations, to sustain those whom she sends. And it matters not where she sends them; whether it be at home or abroad; to the heathen of our great cities; to the ignorant in the thinly-settled portions of the country; or to the few scattered sheep of the flock of Christ who may have none to guide them into his pastures and to the living waters.

3. It is to be borne in mind that the minister is not the officer and organ exclusively of the particular congregation of which he may be the pastor. He is a minister and functionary of the church as a whole. He is ordained by the church and for the

church. He is as much a minister without a congregation as with one. He is responsible to the church as a whole, dependent upon it, and employed in its service, and therefore the responsibility for his support rests on the whole church. If he is unworthy, or idle, or inefficient, he may be dismissed, or put on a retired list. But while he is able and willing to work, it is the sin and shame of the church to which he belongs that he is not employed and adequately supported. The relation of a minister to the church is, in this point, analogous to the relation of the officers of the army and navy to the country. Our military officers belong to the country; they are in the service of the country, and they are sustained by the country. The children of the world are wiser in their generation than the children of light. It would be well for the church if she discharged her duty to her ministers as well as the state acquits itself of its obligations to the servants of the public.

4. As it is the common duty of believers to labour for the conversion of sinners, the edification of the people of God, and the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom, it is a duty common to them to sustain the ministry, which is the divinely appointed instrumentality for the accomplishment of those ends. We are bound to do what we can for the salvation and spiritual welfare not only of our immediate friends and neighbours, but of all men wherever they are. The souls of men afar off are as precious as those of our neighbours. The honour of Christ is as much promoted by the salvation of the one as of the other. The union of believers effected by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit secures a love for all believers, and the union of all with Christ produces the desire to bring all men to acknowledge and serve him. There is no pure Christian motive to impel a man to support his own pastor, which does not operate to make him desire to secure the blessings of the gospel and of the stated ministry for his fellow-men, and especially for his fellow-citizens. The recognition of the duty to sustain the ministry as obligatory on the church as a whole, as it grows out of the nature of Christianity, and is the proper outworking of its expansive, catholic spirit, would be the greatest blessing to the church itself. It would promote brotherly love, which our Lord so often and explicitly enjoins as the great duty of his disciples. It would call into

more vigorous exercise all Christian graces. It would lead to self-denial, to diligence and zeal in the work of Christ. It would open a new and copious fountain of blessing to the whole land, and do more for the promotion of the best interests of the nation than any other measure we, as a church, could adopt.

5. The principle in question is recognized in other departments of Christian and benevolent enterprise. Even the state, which is held together by far weaker bonds than those which unite the people of God, recognizes it as a common duty to provide for the education of the people. It is common to hear selfish and narrow-minded men say that it is unreasonable to tax one man for the education of another man's children. If he wishes them to be educated, let him pay for it himself. This selfish spirit has at times and places prevailed, and the principle has been adopted of making every teacher dependent on his school for his support. But this plan has been repudiated in every enlightened Christian community. The benefits of knowledge, and especially the ability to read the word of God, were recognized as privileges belonging to all classes, poor as well as rich, to the children of the ignorant and indifferent as well as to those capable of estimating the advantages of mental culture and willing to make sacrifices to secure them for their offspring. It was seen too that the interests of society as a whole, and of all the classes of which it is composed, demand the general education of the people. What was a common benefit should be a common burden. Hence in every enlightened community we have free schools and a school fund; adequate provision is made by a general tax in some way to render the blessings of education attainable by all the people. Why should not the church act on the same principle? Will Christians say that it is unreasonable for them to be taxed to secure the gospel for other men? Will they say, Let those who want the gospel pay for it themselves? No man professing to be a Christian would venture to utter such sentiments aloud. They would shock the most sluggish conscience. Besides, if the common interests of the state are promoted by general education, will not the common interests of the church, which are of so much higher order, be promoted by making the gospel and the ministry accessible

to all its members and to all men? We are simply urging the duty of making a common benefit a common obligation. If we act in reference to the heathen on the principle that the church is one, and that the obligation to send them the gospel rests on the whole church, why should we not act on the same principle in reference to our own people? If it is obligatory in the one case, it is still more obligatory in the other.

This matter is so plain that it cannot well be disputed. Indeed it may be said to be universally recognized. Our Board of Domestic Missions is founded on the principle that it is the duty of the whole church to aid in rendering the gospel accessible to those who of themselves are not able to sustain the expense of a stated minister. This is important as an acknowledgment of a principle; and no one can doubt that great good has resulted to the church and to the country from the operations of that Board. But it does not, and cannot, with its present aim and method, accomplish what the full recognition of the unity of believers and the interests of the church demand. It is well however to bear in mind that in advocating the organization of a sustentation fund, we are only advocating the carrying out more effectually the principle on which the Board of Domestic Missions has been conducted. It may also anticipate one class of objections to say, that the adoption of the plan which has so successfully operated in Scotland, does not necessitate any interference with the work of that Board. It, even as now organized, may be the agent of the church for carrying out the Scottish plan in its application to our church.

Some persons have supposed that by a sustentation fund was intended a permanent fund, the annual interest of which was to be applied to add some five or seven hundred dollars to the salary of every Presbyterian minister in the country. This is a wild idea. This would require a fund of eight or ten millions of dollars. If such a sum could be raised for such a purpose, which is impossible, it would throw the burden of supporting the ministry of the future in large measure on the present generation. No such idea has been seriously entertained in any quarter.

A sustentation fund is a sum raised by annual contributions to carry out the two principles, first, that every minister of

the gospel devoted to his work is entitled, by the command of Christ, to a competent support; and secondly, that the obligation to furnish that support rests upon the church as a whole. That is, that the church in her organic unity is bound to provide an adequate support for every man whom she ordains to the ministry, and who is qualified and willing to devote himself to her service. The soundness of these principles we have endeavoured to establish. In carrying them out the following guiding rules are important.

First, that the contributions to this fund are to be general. While special donations are to be gratefully received, and large contributions from a few wealthy congregations may be reasonably expected, yet success is out of the question, unless every member of the church, as far as possible, is willing to contribute according to his ability. In Scotland, although extraordinary liberality has been exhibited by individuals and congregations in the support of this fund, yet from the beginning the main dependence was placed upon the general contributions of the people. This was a point on which Dr. Chalmers strenuously insisted. He warned the weaker churches from relying on the stronger, and insisted that those who were not willing to help themselves, could not expect to be always helped by others. The duty to contribute to the support of the gospel is as obligatory upon the poor as upon the rich. It is as important as a means of culture for the former as for the latter, to practise self-denial and liberality in the service of Christ. The aggregates of small contributions from a multitude will always exceed that of the larger contributions of the few. The hundreds of millions raised by our government for national expenses from year to year, are made up principally by the five, ten, and twenty dollar taxes paid by the millions, and not by the thousands paid by a few hundred of the population. This therefore is to be settled in the minds of the church from the start. The sustentation fund is not a plan for relieving the poor from the duty of sustaining the ministry, and for throwing that burden exclusively upon the rich. None partake of the blessings of the gospel, who do not participate in its duties. And no man however poor has reason to regard himself as a Christian who is not willing to do what he can to secure for himself and others

the ministration of God's word and of the ordinances of his house. In Scotland, therefore, provision is made for the contributions of those who are not able to pay even as much as a penny a week.

There is always a tendency in the poor of a congregation to throw all pecuniary burdens on the richer members of the church, and a similar tendency on the part of weak churches to rely upon those which are more wealthy. This tendency is in both cases to be resisted; in the former case, both for the poor themselves and for the sake of the congregation to which they belong. The same principles apply in their full force against the disposition of weaker churches to rely exclusively or mainly upon assistance from abroad. It enervates and degrades the weak, and it puts the liberality of the strong to a trial they will not be likely long to sustain. This was found to be "the sorest and heaviest impediment" in the way of the success of the plan in Scotland, which it was foreseen would infallibly frustrate the measure unless effectually resisted. The friends of the sustentation fund, therefore, said, "We should infinitely less value all the additional hundreds and thousands that might be raised from the wealthier congregations, than we should an average elevation of fifty pounds in the contributions which come from the lower half of the scale. This were like the opening of a gate that would set us at liberty, and make us free to expatiate, so as that we might find our way both to the most wretched population in towns, and to the poorest and remotest extremities of the land."

It is, however, not only on moral considerations that the coöperation of all classes in this work is so desirable, the pecuniary value of the smaller contributions, as just remarked, in the aggregate exceeds all that can be expected from wealthy individuals or congregations. Our mightiest rivers owe their fulness to drops of rain, and all great benevolent operations depend upon the small contributions of the many far more than on the large contributions of the few. Neither class should feel exempted. All must coöperate—each giving according to his ability; and without this general coöperation, any sustentation scheme must inevitably fail.

Secondly. Nothing so chimerical as equality in the salaries

of ministers is contemplated. This would be unreasonable and impossible. The expense of living in one place is ten-fold what it is in another. The demands upon the minister's purse are also far greater in some positions than in others. The people of a congregation who contribute their just proportion to the general fund, have the right, and will always exercise it, to give what they see fit to their own pastor. Unity does not mean uniformity, and parity as to constitutional rights, does not imply equality in everything else. In Scotland the attempt was made to have all the church edifices erected on the same model, and to forbid any addition to the dividend received by each minister from the general fund. This was but an attempt. The good sense of the people revolted against the idea. It was seen that the additional money spent by the wealthier congregations in adorning their places of worship, was not taken from the resources which would have swelled the general building fund, but from money which would otherwise never have found its way into the treasury of the church. And in like manner, the money given to supplement a pastor's salary, was not so much subtracted from the sustentation fund, but money which would not have been given at all. In some cases the pew-rents were abolished, on the assumption that the amount paid for the pews would be thrown into the common fund. It was found, however, that the pew-rents were lost, and the fund was not increased. We must allow free scope to the workings of natural feelings, and to religious affections. We cannot secure dead uniformity in anything. The people will dress, and live, and build, and give according to their own dispositions, feelings, tastes, and principles. All we can require, and all that is desirable is, that each and all should have a just regard for others as well as for themselves, and remember that Christian love requires that the necessities of the weak should be supplied from the resources of the strong. What is beyond the limits of that which is necessary to the decent support of the ministry, and the comfort of God's ministers and people, lies outside the sphere of church legislation and ordinances.

It has been objected to the plan of a sustentation fund that it would tend to weaken the bond between the pastor and his people. The Scriptures assume that this is a relation which

implies a reciprocity of benefits. The one bestows spiritual things, the other carnal things. The people feel their obligations to the man who instructs, guides, and comforts them in the way to heaven. They are impelled by a natural and proper feeling to contribute to the well-being of the minister from whom such benefits are received. And the pastor, on his part, is the more bound to the people of whose kind feeling he is daily receiving the expressions. This is a healthful and scriptural relationship. It was feared that it would be impaired by making the pastor independent of the people to whom he ministers. This objection is fully obviated by making the amount received from the general fund sufficient only for a support, and allowing it to be supplemented by the voluntary contributions of the people.

Thirdly. Admitting the obligation of the church as a whole to sustain the ministry, the great question is, How is this to be done? What plan or method should be adopted in order to discharge most effectually and justly this important duty? In answer to this question we propose to submit for the consideration of our brethren a general outline of the method adopted in the Free Church of Scotland.

The point about which the greatest diversity of judgment existed among the advocates of a sustentation fund was, whether there should be an equal dividend made of that fund, or, whether each pastor should receive from the fund an amount proportionate to the sum contributed by his congregation to it. It was proposed that that proportion should be one and a half more. If a church contributed thirty pounds, it would receive ninety; if it gave fifty, it would receive seventy-five; if one hundred, it would get back one hundred and fifty, which was to be regarded as the limit. No contribution from the fund was to be given to raise the salaries of those who received one hundred and fifty pounds, or seven hundred and fifty dollars. With us the limit might be fixed at eight hundred dollars, which is, considering the relative expense of living, a lower standard of support than that adopted in Scotland. Dr. Chalmers was very strenuous in his opposition to the plan of an equal dividend, which was adopted at the beginning. All the four hundred and seventy ministers, who came out from the Established

Church, received at first, and were to receive as long as they lived, an equal portion of the general fund. But when this rule was applied to their successors and to the pastors of new congregations, it awakned serious apprehensions. It was urged that if the same yearly allowance be made to every new minister, however little was received from his congregation, it would lead to such successive reductions of the dividend as must sooner or later involve the whole church in one common overthrow. Another objection was, that it would prevent church extension. No new enterprise could be started, or missionary sustained, except at an expense which, it was said, would be ruinous. Besides this, the congregations, it was assumed, needed the stimulus of the principle of getting only in proportion to what they gave. Notwithstanding the weight of these objections, the plan of an equal dividend has, we believe, been persevered in. This is the only rule consistent with principle. We are bound to sustain those whom we send to preach the gospel. We are not called upon to enrich them. They have renounced the world, and given themselves to the service of the Lord. But we are bound to support them. To an adequate support they have a right. The government does not send a regiment of soldiers to garrison a frontier fort in the wilderness, and require them to protect the country from the incursions of savages, to risk their lives and spend their strength, foregoing all opportunities of advancing their own interests, and then leave them to starve or shift for themselves. This cannot be done. And it is never attempted except in the sphere of religion, and by the church, by us calling ourselves Christians. There always will be men, blessed be God, who will preach the gospel, supported or unsupported, men who will labour and starve in silence, and break their hearts over the sufferings of wife and children, but this does not free the church from the guilt of injustice and cruelty. All that the Free Church contended for was that the church should sustain every faithful minister. As much as possible was to be secured for this purpose from the people to whom he preached. But if they were so besotted, so ignorant, or hardened that they would do little or nothing, they were not to be left to perish, nor were those who carried to them the word of life be left to starve.

We are bound to deal with them as we do with the heathen. We support ministers and churches, teachers and schools, among the Indians, even where the Indians contribute nothing to these objects, but we refuse to do this for our own fellow-citizens, and for the baptized members of our own church. We are not surprised, therefore, that the rule of an equal dividend, (*i. e.*, security for an adequate support,) was adhered to in the Free Church of Scotland. In connection with this system for sustaining pastors, there may be, and should be, a plan for the support of itinerant ministers, evangelists, whose adequate support may require a less sum than is needed for a settled pastor.

Assuming, then, that the church should aim at securing for every settled minister devoted to his work a salary, say, of eight hundred dollars a year, allowing every congregation to supplement that salary to any amount, and in any way it sees fit, the next question is, how is a fund adequate for that purpose to be raised? It is obvious that it cannot be done without thorough organization and constant supervision by the officers of the churches.

As already insisted upon, contributions must be sought from all classes of the people—from the poor as well as from the rich. All must coöperate in a scheme which contemplates the advantage of all, and the advancement of the kingdom of the common Lord of all. In Scotland every parish is divided into districts. Each district is assigned to a deacon or some other person to act as collector. This collector has a book containing the names of all persons connected with the congregation living in his district. It is his duty to call upon each individual, and ascertain how much each is willing to contribute during the year to the sustentation fund, and whether the subscribers prefer to pay weekly, monthly, or quarterly. It is his further duty to collect these subscriptions and to forward the amount to the Treasurer of the fund. Measures must of course be taken to organize and sustain this vast machinery. It will not rise of itself; nor will it continue in successful operation without constant supervision and stimulus. Hence the necessity of a Financial Committee or Central Agency. According to Dr. Chalmers the principles which should regulate the constitution of such a committee are, 1. That it should be com-

posed principally of laymen—men trained in counting-houses or “chambers of agency.” 2. That it would be “monstrous impolicy in the church to confide altogether, or in very great proportion, so large an interest as her Sustentation Fund to the discretionary and unremunerated attendance even of her most zealous and best qualified adherents. There ought to be a greatly fuller paid agency, and with all the guaranties for a vigorous and punctual discharge of our business, which obtain in our national offices, or in any of the great trading establishments of the country. And first, in addition to a treasurer with the proper complement of clerks, there should be a Lay Superintendent, whose business it is, whether by personal visits, or by the emanations of a central correspondence, to keep the whole machinery of the Associations constantly and vigorously a going.” “It is of the utmost importance to our financial prosperity, that we should have a Superintendent of thorough business ability and habits, under the control, at the same time, and surveillance of a Committee, mainly composed of business men.” 3. There should also, he says, “be a Clerical Correspondent, who, besides seeing to the preparation and issue of tracts and circulars, charged with the high matters of principle and religious duty, should hold converse chiefly, if not exclusively, with the ministers of the Free Church. Without an office of this sort, both well filled and well executed, our present financial returns will not be increased, will not even be upholden. If left exclusively in the hands of secular men, the whole financial system will be secularized, after which it will infallibly go to pieces. Our’s is essentially a religious operation for a religious object, and if separated from the religious principle by which it is kept in healthful and living play, then, as if bereft of its needful and sustaining aliment, it will wither into extinction in a few years.” 4. He urges the appointment of agents to visit the Associations, putting them into action and good order, and setting up new ones. “This,” he says, “is the true way of making the life-blood of our cause circulate from the heart to extremities of Scotland.” “We do hope,” he adds, “that these mighty advantages will reconcile the church to the expenses of a larger paid agency. There is a prejudice, I had almost said, a low-minded suspicion, on this subject, most

grievously adverse to the enlargement of the Church's resources and her means. The sum of two thousand pounds or even three thousand, and perhaps more, rightly expended on right men, would be remunerated more than fifty-fold by the impulse thus given to the mechanism of our Associations."

These views of a man so remarkable for his constructive genius as Dr. Chalmers, and so revered for his character and services, are submitted for the consideration of those who may favour the adoption of the plan of a sustentation fund for the ministry of our church.

Such is the general outline of the scheme. The considerations in favour of its adoption are briefly as follows:

1. It is practicable. What has been done, may be done. What has been carried out successfully for years in Scotland, may be carried out in America. It is true the work is far more extensive here than there, and has difficulties to encounter here which were not to be overcome there. But if our work be the more difficult, it is more necessary, and we have more men and greater resources, so that in proportion to the strength of the two bodies, the Free Church of Scotland had perhaps as heavy a burden to bear as can ever be imposed on us. That this plan of a general sustentation fund is practicable, is proved not only by the example of the Free Church, but also by that of the Methodists. Among that extensive and flourishing body of Christians, the minister is not made dependent on the particular church to which he preaches, but is sustained by the general funds of the body as a whole. This general fund is supplied in part from the weekly contributions of the members, and partly from the profits of their extensive "book concern." How efficient this scheme has proved in their hands, is proved by the experiment both in England and America. In answer to the cavil that the plan of a general contribution was "a proposal to grind the faces of the poor for the support of an ecclesiastical system," Dr. Chalmers says, "These reasoners would be puzzled to understand how it is that the Methodists of England, many of them in humble life, give their shilling a month, or even their six-pence a week, for the maintenance of the gospel. Why, after all, they form the best conditioned and most prosperous community in the empire. The truth is, that

instead of what they give being extracted from the earnings of their hard and honest industry, it were far more correct to say, in reference to the great majority of their converts, that what they give is the spontaneous tribute of but a fraction from the squanderings of their former extravagance." Presbyterians of this country, it is hoped, will not be disposed to pronounce impracticable what has been actually accomplished by their brethren in Scotland, and by other bodies of believers both in Europe and America.

2. Another consideration in favour of this plan, is that it is only the application to the home-field of the principle on which we act in the foreign field. When we send a missionary to the heathen, it is not on his own charges. We do not tell him to gather his support from the people to whom he carries the gospel, or sustain himself as he best can. We know that the heathen cannot, or will not support him; and we know that if required to support himself either in whole or in part, his efficiency as a missionary would be impaired or destroyed. We therefore pledge the faith of the church that he shall be sustained. This is right; it is Christian; it is necessary. Why should not the same principle be acted upon at home? Souls here are as valuable as the souls of the heathen. The necessity of a pastor supporting himself is as inconsistent with his efficiency here as it is abroad; it is as much in contravention of the command of Christ and of the spirit of the gospel in the one case as in the other. The suffering entailed by the neglect of this duty is as great in this country as it would be anywhere else.

3. Another great recommendation of a sustentation fund is that it would enable the church to secure the service of the numerous ministers who are now unoccupied. What that number is we are unable accurately to determine. The estimates which we have seen vary so much that they cannot be relied upon. The lowest estimate places the number at several hundred. Whenever a vacancy occurs in a self-sustaining church, the pulpit is crowded with candidates. Many men in the prime of life, of high culture and attainments, are obliged to seek for months, or even years, before they can find a field of labour to which they feel authorized to take their families.

From these facts some have inferred that the ministry is overstocked, that the supply exceeds the demand, and they therefore call for curtailing the number of ministers and candidates. These men know not what they do. The complaint is not that the church is overrun by unconverted or incompetent ministers; but that we have too many really pious and well qualified men in the sacred office. Those who make this objection profess to believe that the Holy Ghost as truly calls men to the ministry as he calls them to faith and salvation. The church through her appropriate organs solemnly declares, that, in her judgment, every man whom she ordains, is called of God to the ministry of the word. As the complaint is not of remissness, or want of fidelity on the part of the presbyteries, it is in fact a complaint against the Holy Spirit. He has been too lavish in his calls. If this is revolting; if this shocks every Christian's mind, it is not our fault. We simply put into plain English the real meaning of those who complain that we have too many faithful and well qualified men in the ministry. What is true in this matter, and all that is true, is, that we have more ministers than we have self-sustaining churches; more men whom God has called to preach the gospel, than the church is willing to support. There is the difficulty. If we should do our duty, we would find that God would multiply the ministry ten-fold, and increase an hundred-fold the ability and willingness of the church to support them all. It is difficult for the individual to obtain Christian symmetry of character. Some are prominent for one virtue and deficient in another. So it is with churches. Some are more devoted to the care of the poor than to foreign missions; some to education than to sustentation. What is needed is, not that the work well done should be neglected, but that what has been neglected should be properly attended to. If we, as a church, have prayed more, and laboured more, in order that God would send labourers into his harvest, than that he would give his people wisdom and liberality to provide for their support, we should not complain that he has answered our prayers, but seek for grace to turn his gifts to advantage.

The objection that the ministry is overstocked can be made by those only who forget that the field is the world; that Christ

has commanded us to preach the gospel to every creature. In some of our cities there are half a million of men who are living almost in the darkness of heathenism. Every unemployed minister in our church could be profitably employed in two such crowded places as New York and Philadelphia. And while these thousands have no one to care for their souls, men complain that we have too many ministers! Two-thirds of the human family have never heard of Christ. In many lands to which we have sent missionaries there is not one minister to a million of people. It is a strange thing therefore to hear from the lips of Christians that God has given his church too many preachers. What we want is the heart to support them. There is room for ten times as many faithful ministers as we now have. Even in our land, in some large states, the proportion of our ministers to the population is less now than it was ten years ago. And the records show that all the graduates of all our seminaries would be required in some of the Western States to keep the proportion of ministers to the people what it is at the present time; to say nothing of the constant losses by death, and to the demands of other portions of the land. If the church could be brought to resolve to give an adequate support to every minister able and willing to work, we should soon find that the number of such ministers was too small and not too large. The sin therefore that so many qualified men fail to find employment rests on the church.

4. Another consideration in favour of a sustentation fund is, that it is necessary to render the church aggressive. We are falling behind other denominations. In our cities and towns the Episcopalians are eating us out. In other places the Baptists, Congregationalists, or Methodists, are occupying the ground. We rejoice in the progress of these churches. In every way Christ is preached. But we have our duty to perform, and our part to do in the work of advancing the kingdom of God. Our candlestick will be removed out of its place, unless that duty be performed. The Secretary of the Board of Missions, in his last communication to the churches (Dec. 1865), says: "The requisitions of the past year have not been met. New fields could have been entered, new territories secured, and our church been represented in the advance of that great tide

of population which rolls across the continent." The demand for ministers, he tells us, is above the supply; directly the reverse of what some of our religious journals are striving to make our people believe. "Unless," says the Secretary, "the Lord of the harvest furnish the labourers, the harvest, so far as our church is concerned, will be ungathered,—golden opportunities will be lost." "We have not the men." "There are men," he tells us, "who hover around vacancies . . . but men glowing with missionary zeal we have not." "Great and precious revivals of religion can only remedy this great and serious evil. Earthly sacrifices are not counted by earnest hearts, who have received the baptism; men of whom our fathers have told us, counted it an honour to suffer for Christ—men who laid the foundations of our church in the early history of our country." It thus appears that important fields are constantly presenting which we cannot occupy. The reason is, that we have not the men who are willing to go. There are men enough to hover around vacancies, but not men of "missionary zeal," "of earnest hearts;" men "willing to suffer for Christ." The whole fault of the failure of the church to do her duty to Christ and the world, is thus thrown upon the ministers. There is another side to this question. The ministers thus complained of give as much evidence of zeal and willingness to suffer as the rest of us. They are willing to go if they are supported; we are not willing to support them. We say, Go and suffer. It is an honour to suffer. If you had a proper spirit you would not shrink from "these earthly sacrifices." Now it is very plain that it is no more their duty to go, than it is our duty to sustain them. They are no more called to make the sacrifice of leaving home and friends, and early associations, and to encounter all the trials incident to a new mode of life, and to labouring among the ignorant and destitute, than we are to make the sacrifice of so increasing our contributions to the missionary fund, as to secure an adequate support to those whom we send to labour and suffer in our stead and to do our work. Until we do our duty, we are not in a state of mind to reprove the negligence or want of zeal of others. Until we take the beam out of our own eye, we cannot see clearly to take the mote out of our brother's eye. There may be, and doubtless there

is, in the ministry a lack of the zeal and devotion which they ought to possess. That they will be the first to acknowledge, and we may all join in the same humiliating confession. But this is not the real difficulty. The blame is not with the ministers. It is with the church. If the church refuses to comply with the command of Christ and provide an adequate support for those whom she sends into the field, she has no right to turn round and upbraid them with the want of zeal. Hear what the Spirit says by the mouth of the apostle, "Have we not the right to eat and to drink? Have we not the right to lead about a wife? Have we not the right to forbear working? Who goeth a warfare at his own charges? Doth not the law say the same thing? for Moses said, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox which treadeth out the corn." If men support the brutes who labour in their service, shall they refuse to support their Christian brethren whom they send to labour for the church and for their divine Master? Surely the lips of the church should be sealed until we are willing to perform a duty so clearly commanded and so self-evidently obligatory.

We are slow to believe that our ministers are less zealous or self-sacrificing than the Romish priests, or than the Methodist clergy. They go everywhere. They plant firm feet on all unoccupied territory. Not because they have more zeal, but because they have a church behind them. They are sure of being sustained. They know that they will not be allowed to struggle single-handed, uncheered and unsupported. We find men willing to go to the heathen, because they know they will not be called upon to support themselves or to suffer for the necessities of life. If therefore the church would do her duty in this matter and secure an adequate support to every minister whom she sends into the field, she would, we are persuaded, have little reason to complain of the want of a missionary spirit in the clergy. At any rate we are bound to do our duty.

It is obvious also that a competent sustentation fund would greatly increase the efficiency of the church. It would redeem from secular pursuits all that portion of time which ministers have now to devote to securing the means of support. Taking the ministry as a whole, it is probable, one-third of their time

is necessarily taken from their official duties for that purpose. We may also reasonably hope for a corresponding increase of their spirituality. At least the excuse for engaging in worldly pursuits would be taken away, and greater responsibility would be imposed. All the institutions of the church would have increased stability and permanence, where they are now occasional, uncertain, and ever changing. We should present an ever-advancing front. Congregations too feeble to support the gospel at all, under this steady culture, would soon be able not only to sustain themselves, but to aid in sustaining others. A new spirit of alacrity and confidence would be infused into the ministry. The church itself would feel a new life in all its parts. It would renew its strength by the exercise of the graces of liberality and devotion to its divine Head, and if the principles which Paul lays down in 2 Cor. ix. 8, is still to be relied upon, it would grow in wealth in proportion as it increased in the bountifulness of its benefactions. There is no surer way of securing the Divine favour, than the faithful performance of duty.

Many objections, more or less formidable, will doubtless be urged against the plan of a sustentation fund. It may be objected that making a pastor independent of his congregation will render him idle. If secure of a support, whether he works or not, he will be sorely tempted to neglect his work. To this it may be answered, 1. That this supposes the minister to be without conscience and without any true devotion to his Master's service. We have greater security against the admission of unworthy men into the ministry than we have against the admission of unworthy members into the church. Such cases will always occur, but to reject a great and necessary scheme, because perfection cannot be secured in its operation, would be unwise. 2. The pastor, even when sustained by a general fund, is not independent of his congregation. The fund can yield him little more than the necessaries of life; and that supply would soon be cut off in cases of persistent neglect of duty. 3. The Methodist clergy, although sustained by a general fund, are faithful and laborious. The same is true of the ministers of the Free Church, and of the clergy of Prussia. The latter are sustained by the government and go through the

laborious parish duties imposed upon them with the regularity of clock-work. Indeed, all the officers of the government, civil and military, are independent of those whom they immediately serve. Our foreign missionaries are faithful and devoted men although sustained by the church at home. We may surely dismiss this objection as derogatory not only to the ministry, but to the promise and grace of Christ. A more serious objection may be founded on the largeness of the sum which it will be necessary to raise. In answer to this it may be said,

1. That sums proportionably large are raised by other churches.
2. That all that is needed to make this burden light is its equal distribution, to be secured by a thorough and efficient organization.

How readily were millions of money raised during the war to alleviate the bodily wants of our soldiers. The souls of men can suffer more than their bodies. The greatest difficulties to be encountered will doubtless arise from the undue multiplication of churches. This is a great evil already. In a population not able to sustain more than one church, there are often five or six, Presbyterian, Episcopal, Methodist, Baptist, and Roman Catholic, and that too where there is little or no prospect of growth. The principle should be adopted that a pastor is not to be permanently sustained in any place where the people have access to other evangelical churches, unless he has an adequate field of labour. There must be a rigid supervision as to this matter exercised by not only the Presbyteries, but by the Central Committee, and by the General Assembly.

Notwithstanding these and other objections and difficulties, we believe that if we could secure the services of some man of the executive power of George H. Stuart, of Philadelphia, who made the Christian Commission what it was, the plan of a sustentation fund could be carried into successful operation in the course of a very few years. Then we should stand erect again, with our loins girded, and our feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.