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PROTESTANTISM AND ROMANISM.

THE quiet of the Protestant Church has suffered no little disturbance of late, by the frequency of the transitions from its ranks, to the Church of Rome. In many instances, these defections have been on the part of men, of weight and decided depth of sanctity, earnestness and theological ability. It has been usual in such cases, to dismiss the whole matter, with but a passing notice of the fact, accompanied with perhaps a sneering expression of pity, in view of such an exhibition of extreme folly, the result either of mental imbecility, or of an hypocrisy more or less well concealed. Such has been the complacency and overweening confidence of many good men in the Protestant Church—such the ease with which they have conducted to its final resolution, much of perplexity and mystery, which engaged the prayers and spiritual travail of the Church of all ages, that should any one still be found, who unfortunately, is unable to sympathize in full measure in their confidence, he is set down as a proper subject for commiseration, or else despised as destitute of all moral principle. All this might do, and pass current

VOL. IV.—NO. II.

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SYSTEMATIC BENEVOLENCE.¹

Lev. xxvii: 30-32.

Ex. xxx: 13-16.

1 Cor. xvi: 1-2.

Act, xx: 35.

BENEVOLENCE is a necessary manifestation of *love*, which, as the product of a living faith, constitutes the cardinal virtue of Christianity, the fulfilment of the whole moral law. You might as well separate the sun from light and heat, as love from charity and benevolence. Faith without works is dead, so is love without acts of charity. The Apostle calls upon us to love, not with words or with the tongue only, but "in deed and in truth." All that we are and that we possess, as natural men and as regenerate christians, we owe to the free mercy of God, our Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier, and we are therefore bound, by the most sacred of obligations, to love Him in return by keeping His commandments. We have no right to live, unless we live for the glory of God and for the good of our fellow men. It is only in this way, that we can secure true happiness on earth and eternal bliss in heaven.

Our first and principal duty is to consecrate our *lives*, our persons and services to the Lord, who gave Himself for us. Our second duty which is already involved in the first, requires us to devote our *property* and our *possessions* to the Lord. But how shall this be done? We cannot give our money directly to Him, nor does He need it. Still we give it to Him by giving it to His cause, to the furtherance of His kingdom in the world, and to the promotion of every good work connected with His glory and the salvation of men. Yea, even a drink of water offered to the lowliest of His disciples in time of need, He will regard as offered to Himself, and reward it openly on the great day of account. For He identifies His cause in condescending love with the cause of His people, and if we serve the church, which is His body, in the proper spirit and from pure motives, we serve Him and promote His glory, while we at the same time realize the end of our being and secure the salvation of our immortal soul.

¹ A Sermon preached by appointment before the Synod of the German Reformed Church of the U. S., at Lancaster, Pa., on the 20th of October, 1851, and published by request of the Synod.

Benevolence ought, however, not to be looked upon merely as a duty, but at the same time as a *pleasure* and *privilege*. "It is more blessed," says Christ, "to give than to receive." God is love, and as such the fountain of all bliss. All His works are manifestations of His love, whose nature consists in self-communication, in going out of itself and entering into its object. He delights in creating, preserving, redeeming and perfecting man, formed in His image, and in pouring upon him His choicest blessings, yea in making him a partaker of His own glory. The more we love, the more godlike and happy we become. He who does not give cheerfully, but merely from a feeling of duty or from outward compulsion, has not yet the gospel-spirit and denies himself the sweetest and purest enjoyment. As selfishness is the principle of sin and the source of all misery, so its opposite, love to God and man, is the principle of holiness and the fountain of true happiness.

The *objects* of christian benevolence are, the maintenance and promotion of virtue and religion at home and abroad, and the support of the poor. To provide for these objects it is of the greatest importance to follow a certain *method* or *system*. God is a God of order, in all His works and ways. Order and regularity are the secret of success in every line of business. Why is it that certain denominations, whose membership mostly belong to the middle and poorer classes of society, contribute such large sums annually for the benevolent operations of the Church, whilst other denominations of equally sound doctrine, of as much piety in other respects, and of greater wealth contribute much less? Why can the Moravians and the Methodists, for instance, support so many ministers and missionaries at home and abroad? Why can the Roman Catholics build such costly cathedrals and establish so many charitable institutions? Because they pursue a regular system of benevolence and train all their members to give, however small the individual donations may be. A great many rivulets make a large stream, and a large quantity of small stones an imposing building. The comparatively slow progress and languishing condition of most of the benevolent operations in the German Churches of this country, is greatly, if not altogether, owing to the want of such a general system of co-operation. A few of our liberal members have thus far carried nearly the whole burden of our general enterprises, whilst perhaps the majority have done little or nothing towards any of them.

It is said sometimes, that the German population are constitutionally illiberal and close. But this is refuted by facts. Fran-

ke's Orphan House at Halle and many similar institutions founded by the Pietists in Wiütemberg, are to be numbered amongst the brightest monuments of active benevolence. The Moravian Society is of German origin and complexion, and history hardly furnishes an equal number of Christians of any creed, who in proportion to their means have shown so much liberality and self-sacrifice in the work of missions. The German mind and character has abundantly proven itself to be capable of the greatest devotion and self-sacrifice, in almost every department of intellectual and moral activity; why should it not be equally capable of consecrating its perishing earthly treasures to the cause of truth, virtue and religion? If we succeed in training our churches to a regular system of benevolence, we shall have no difficulty in supporting our pastors, in building churches, in founding parochial schools, academies, colleges and seminaries of theology, in educating pious young men for the ministry of the gospel, in providing for the poor and the needy, and in doing our mite towards carrying the innumerable blessings of christianity to the uttermost parts of the world.

The subject of *systematic benevolence* then is of no small importance to us at this time, and closely connected with all our interests, with our external and internal prosperity as a branch of the church of Jesus Christ. I do not flatter myself that I shall do justice at all to this subject in the remarks which I intend to offer, on this occasion, at the request of Synod, or be able to propose a plan which may give entire satisfaction to our ministers and laymen. But I hope, I may at least succeed in spreading some light and in suggesting some ideas, which may be of service in the synodical discussion on the subject, and in the formation of that scheme of benevolence which may finally be agreed upon for the benefit of our beloved Zion. Believing that the word of God and the history of His church are, as in every thing connected with religion, so also in this respect our best and only sure guides, I shall speak first of the *Jewish* system of liberality as established by Jehovah Himself in the Old Testament; secondly of the liberality of the early *Christian* Church; and in the third place make the practical application of the lessons of revelation and of history to our *present* circumstances in our *German Churches of America*. It is expected that the last part should be made most prominent, in view of the practical purpose before us. The limits of a sermon, however, will of course, only permit me, to present the subject in its general outlines.

I. Systematic Benevolence amongst the Jews.

In the Old Testament dispensation, God had ordained a fixed rule for the exercise of benevolence.

1. He prescribed three kinds of regular taxes for the support of religion.

a. In the first place he required of the Jews, who were originally all possessed of real property, the *tenth part* of all the produce of the soil and the herd, or the corresponding value in money, for the support of the priesthood. "And all the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land, or of the fruit of the tree, is the Lord's; it is holy unto the Lord. And if a man will at all redeem ought of his tithes, he shall add thereto the fifth part thereof. And concerning the tithe of the herd, or of the flock, even of whatsoever passeth under the rod, the tenth shall be holy unto the Lord," Lev. 27: 30-32; comp. Num. 18: 21-26; Deut. xiv: 22-27; Nehem. x: 37-39. This tithe, like all other tributes, the Jews were properly to give to the Lord Himself, and He then made it over, as a heritage, to the Levites, who had no real property, Num. xviii: 24. The Levites again had to give the tithe of this tithe to the Priests, Num. xviii: 26ff; Nehem. x: 38. This institution was not originated, but only improved and developed by the Mosaic law. We find phrases of it already at an earlier period in the days of Abraham, who offered the tenth of his conquest to Melchisedec, the mysterious priest of the most high God (Gen. xiv: 20; Heb. vii: 2). Yea even amongst heathen nations the custom prevailed, to consecrate to some god or goddess the tenth part of the produce of the soil, of the industrial gain and the spoils of war, as we learn from Herodotus, Xenophon, Pausanias, Plutarchus, Plinius, Macrobius, Tustinus and other ancient writers. This fact proves, how natural such an institution was and how easily it fell in with the general religious wants of humanity.

b. In the second place, the Israelites were required to offer to the Lord a part of the *first fruits* of all the agricultural produce, raw as well as prepared for human use, (such as wheat, fruits of trees, grapes, cider, oil, flour,) before they made use of the rest, Ex. xxiii: 19; Num. xviii: 12f; Deut. xxvi: 2ff; Nehem. x: 33, etc. These offerings were eaten by the priests, (Deut. xviii: 3f; Ezech. xxxiv: 30f;) their measure and number, however, was not prescribed, but left to the free will of the individual. In addition to this, the whole nation, in order to show their gratitude for the blessing of harvest, used to bring on each Passover a sheaf of the first fruits, and on each Pentecost two

wave-loaves of two tenth-deals, with animal offerings, to the priest as a sacrifice unto the Lord, Lev. xxiii : 10-20.

c. The third regular tribute was intended for the support of the national sanctuary, first the *tabernacle* and afterwards the *temple* of Jerusalem. Every Israelite of twenty years and above was obliged to give annually for this object *half a shekel*, or a didrachma, i. e. a silver coin of thirty cents value, Exod. xxx : 13ff; 2 Chron. xxiv : 6; Matth. xvii : 24-27.

These were the ordinary taxes which had to be paid by all the Jews, even by those who lived out of Palestine, for the maintenance and promotion of the O. T. religion.

2. The second object of benevolence, the support of the *poor*, who are found in every nation and under the best form of government, was very wisely provided for by the Mosaic law. To them was left an after harvest on the fields, olive-yards and vineyards, Lev. xix : 9, 10; Deut. xxiv : 19-21. Moreover in the sabbath year, that is in every seventh year, when the soil was not cultivated, the poor, the widows, the orphans and the strangers had free access to all that grew spontaneously in the fields and in vineyards, Lev. xxv : 5, 6; and they were to be invited besides to the meals of tithe, which took place every three years before the dwelling of every citizen, Deut. xiv : 28f, xxvi : 12-14. Finally, the year of jubilee, i. e. every fiftieth year, restored the equality, renewed the whole theocracy and returned to destitute Israelites the lost possession of their family property, Lev. xxv : 8-17-39-41; xxvii : 17ff.

If we add to these regular gifts of benevolence the voluntary deeds of charity, and the extraordinary contributions for particular occasions, such as the building of the temple and of synagogues, we may suppose that many a pious Jew gave not less than the fourth or even the third part of his annual income to the Lord. Of Zacchæus, who was, however, already touched by the spirit of the gospel, which ought to make men still more liberal than the law, we learn Luke xix : 8, that he gave even the half of his goods to the poor, and was willing, if he had taken any thing from any man unjustly, to restore it to him four fold. And yet this was no loss, but a gain and a blessing. In proportion to their faithfulness in the discharge of these duties, the nation prospered externally and internally. "Honor the Lord with thy substance and with the first fruits of all thine increase : So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine," Prov. iii : 9, 10. "There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth ; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty. The liberal

soul shall be made fat, and he that watereth shall be watered also himself," Prov. xi : 24, 25. "He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the Lord; and that which he hath given, will He pay him again," Prov. xix : 17, (cp. Ps. xxxxi : 2-4, Ps. 112 : 5-9, Tob. iv : 11; xii : 9.) The same law of divine reward is expressed also in the New Test. by our Saviour Himself: "Give and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down and shaken together and running over, shall men give unto your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again," Luke vi : 38.

The care and administration of those legal and voluntary sacrifices was entrusted to special curators, and thirteen chests called "trumpets" on account of their shape, were placed in the outer court of the temple for their reception, 2 Chr. xxxi : 11, 12, Nehem. x : 38, 39. There the pious widow in the gospel had a chest for the poor, into which two men deposited the collected alms, and out of these every poor man of the congregation received as much on the eve of the sabbath, as he needed for the following week.

II. Systematic Benevolence in the Primitive Church.

1. In the *New Testament* we have no passage, by which this Jewish system of benevolence is either expressly confirmed or abrogated. But the Saviour points out in a general way His relation to the Old Testament dispensation which may be applied also to the case in hand. He declares in the sermon of the mount, Matth. v : 17, that His mission was not to destroy the law and the prophets, but to fulfil them. The whole Mosaic law is indeed abolished in a certain sense, namely in its national and temporal form and as a killing letter, but in its spirit and essence it is confirmed, sharpened, deepened and brought to perfection by Jesus Christ, theoretically as well as practically, by His perfect doctrine and by His sinless holy life. He delivered us from the curse of the law, fulfilled it by His active and passive obedience, and gives us by his Holy Spirit and example the power to fulfil it also. Concerning the duty of charity and liberality in particular, we cannot for a moment suppose that it should have lost any of its force and extent in the N. T. dispensation, on the contrary it has increased in proportion to the increase of grace. If already the Jews, in the moon-light of the Q. T. revelation, were required to manifest so much gratitude,

how much more must be expected from christians, in the midst of the full splendor of the sun of the gospel and that perfect revelation of love, which God has made in His only begotten Son? The greater the blessing bestowed upon us, the greater the gratitude required from us.

This inference from the general spirit of our holy religion is confirmed, by the actual condition of the Apostolical congregations. We find that the early christians, in the ardor of their first love and the fresh enjoyment of the unspeakable goodness of their Saviour, manifested a spirit of self-denial and benevolence, which far surpasses the Old Testament examples. The congregation of Jerusalem went so far as to introduce a voluntary community of goods; the rich members, in literal fulfilment of the commandment of Christ, Luke xii : 33, sold their possessions and laid the price at the Apostles' feet, for the benefit of the poor and suffering, Acts ii : 45, iv : 34-37. In the other congregations, where this system could not be carried out, there was at least the same spirit of self-denying love and beneficence, that true christian communism which,—without abolishing the difference of riches and poverty in a political point of view, and without destroying the variety of life according to the abstract theories and impracticable dreams of modern pseudo-reformers,—equalizes this difference from within, and makes both wealth and poverty subservient to high moral ends. The example of Tabitha, who provided for the clothing of widows and orphans with the labor of her own hand (Acts ix : 36), was certainly not isolated in the Apostolic church, but only a manifestation of its general spirit. When a famine broke out in Palestine, a. 44, all the disciples in Antioch contributed to the relief of their brethren according to their means (Acts xi : 29). The apostle Paul was especially concerned, in the midst of his many labors, to provide for his suffering fellow christians, and ordered collections to be taken up weekly in the Greek churches, for the benefit of the poor Jewish converts in Palestine, as we see from 1 Cor. xvi : 1, 2, a passage which will claim our more particular attention in the third part. He gives special praise in this respect to the christians in Macedonia, who, although comparatively poor themselves, did their utmost for the relief of their distant brethren in the faith.

We have no particular account of the way and method, by which the apostolical congregations supported their pastors and teachers. The Lord Himself, however, and St. Paul inculcates on several occasions (Matth x : 11, Luke x : 7, 8, 1 Cor. ix : 6-14, 1 Tim. v : 17, Gal. vi : 6,) the self-evident, although fre-

quently forgotten principle, that the laborer is worthy of his hire, and that the minister of the gospel is perfectly entitled to his temporal support from the congregation, to which he communicates the eternal blessings of the kingdom of heaven. By doing this, the people simply discharge a sacred duty of gratitude to God and His servants. It is very probable, yea almost certain, that the christians of Jewish descent adhered to the old custom of devoting the tithes and the first fruits to the support of religion; for as we know, they continued conscientiously to observe the whole moral and ceremonial law till the destruction of Jerusalem, without, however, imposing the same burden upon their brethren of heathen origin, (Acts xv : 28, 29). At all events, from the scattered hints of the N. Test., we must form a very high opinion of the liberality and self-denying love of the primitive churches, particularly if we take into consideration their general poverty, the many persecutions and consequent losses to which they were subjected, the numerous missionary travels of the apostles, of their delegates and co-laborers, the greater part of whom could no doubt apply to themselves the words of St. Peter: "Silver and gold have I none" (Acts iii : 6.), and who were consequently dependent upon the voluntary support of the believers.

2. If we now leave the apostolical period, and cast a glance into the succeeding age of the church, we find, in the *first three centuries* particularly, that self denying and sacrificing love and benevolence were amongst the most prominent traits of the disciples of Jesus, and formed a most striking contrast to the cold and icy selfishness of the surrounding heathens. It is well known that the latter in the time of *Tertullian*, towards the end of the second and the beginning of the third century, used to exclaim with astonishment: "How the christians love one another, and how they are ready to die for one another!"

They did not confine, however, this love to their brethren in the faith, but, in obedience to the command of Christ (Math. v : 44,) they exercised it even towards the Pagans and Jews, who persecuted them with slander, fire and sword. In those numerous public calamities, which befell the Roman empire at that time, such as war, famine and pestilence, they took care of the poor, the sick, the prisoners and sufferers of every description, and preached by these deeds, more powerfully than by words, the divine character of their religion. When Northern Africa was visited by a destructive disease, a. 251, and when the heathens at Carthage, from fear of contagion, mercilessly threw the sick and the dying on the highways, in such numbers

that the whole city was threatened with a general infection, the noble-minded bishop *Cyprian* assembled his congregation, and exhorted them, although they had just suffered a bloody persecution, to heap coals of fire on the head of their enemies. "If we," he remarked, "do good only to our own, we do no more, than publicans and heathens; we must, as genuine christians, conquer the evil with good, love our enemies too, as our Lord exhorts us to do, and pray also for our persecutors. As we are born of God, we must, as the children of God, show ourselves worthy of this origin, by imitating our Father's goodness." This appeal was obeyed without delay. Some gave their money, others their labor, and in a short time the dead were all buried and Carthage freed from the danger of destruction. The notorious emperor, *Julian the Apostate*, who after the middle of the fourth century did his best, by all sorts of artifice, although without success, to restore the prostrate heathenism, was found with all his hatred of christianity to acknowledge this trait of benevolence in its professors, and imitated their hospitals and asylums for strangers, in order to bring his beloved idolatry into popular favor. "Let us consider," he said, "that nothing has contributed so much to the progress of the superstition of the Galileans (—thus he contemptuously called the christians—) as their charity to the poor and to strangers. I think we ought to discharge this obligation ourselves. Establish hospitals in every place. For it is shameful that the heathens assist not even those of their own faith, while the Jews never beg, and the impious Galileans provide not only for their own poor, but also for ours, and thus help the worst cause by a commendable action." Stronger testimony could hardly be desired, than this reluctant confession of a bitter enemy.

From the earliest times, the christians in accordance with the apostolic precept (1 Cor xvi : 1-2) were in the habit of taking up *collections*, in the *weekly services*, for the benefit of the poor, the sick, the widows, the orphans and captives, every one contributing according to his ability and good will. In extraordinary cases, the bishops instituted special collections or fasts, and applied what the people saved by abstinence from food to the relief of near or distant need. The more wealthy congregations of large cities, for instance that of Rome, frequently forwarded pecuniary aid to the most remote regions, particularly for those who were persecuted on account of their faith. About the middle of the third century, Bishop *Cyprian*, with his clergy, raised in a short time over three thousand dollars, to purchase several christians of Numidia from captivity. He transmitted

the gift with an affectionate letter, from which we extract this passage: "The apostle Paul says: As many of you as are baptised, have put on Christ. Therefore we must in our captive brethren behold that Christ, who has purchased us from the danger of captivity, and redeemed us from the danger of death. We must feel constrained to free Him from the hands of the barbarians, who has delivered us from the abyss of Satan, and who now abides and dwells in us; to purchase with a small sum of money Him, who bought us by His cross and blood, and who permits this case of need to occur, in order to try our faith, and to make it appear, whether we are willing to do for others what we would wish to have done to ourselves, if we were kept in bondage by barbarians."

The payment of the *tithes*, the *first fruits* and *oblations* to the ministry, passed from the Jewish theocracy over into the christian church; at first in a free manner as a voluntary sacrifice, afterwards from the sixth century as a legal duty, the neglect of which was followed by certain ecclesiastical, and if necessary, even civil punishments. Most of the church fathers, Irenæus, Origen, Gregory of Nazianz, Chrysostom, Hilary, Augustine, Jerome and others, approve of and recommend this Old Testament institution for imitation, and assert very properly, that the christians should not fall short of the Jews, but ought rather to surpass them in liberality and piety. Ecclesiastical laws, however, requiring the payment of the tithes under punishment of excommunication, are not found before the year 585; and civil laws threatening with legal compulsion began to be introduced at a still later date, in the eighth century under Charlemagne, who himself gave the tithes of all his private possessions and of his Saxon dominions to the church. In Europe this duty of the tithes still exists either wholly or in part in several Roman Catholic and Protestant countries, particularly in England and Sweden, and is kept up by laws of the state; whilst in other countries the secular power at the time of the Reformation, and still more since the first French Revolution, has to a very considerable extent, in England under Henry VIII, in several German states, in France and in Spain, plundered the treasures of the church, heaped up by the piety of former centuries, and stopped or alienated her legal income from its original purpose. In the Oriental churches, it was and is still customary, to devote the tithes as a free gift and religious duty to sacred objects, according to Old Testament example, and in obedience to the recommendations of the early Fathers; but it was never legally introduced amongst them, yea the coercion of the same

by threatening with ecclesiastical punishments was even prohibited by laws.

As it regards the *administration* of legal and voluntary gifts for the cause of religion, they were in the early ages of the church distributed into four portions, under the superintendence of the bishop and his treasurer; the first portion was devoted to the bishop, the second to his clergy, the third to the poor, and the fourth to the support of the religious services and the ecclesiastical buildings. In some countries they made only three portions, and left it to the discretion of the bishop and the clergy, to provide according to circumstances for the relief of the poor, the sick, the stranger, the widows and the orphans.

It would be both interesting and instructive, to follow the history of christian charity and benevolence through the various periods of the church. There we would meet, even in the darkest centuries, particularly also in the little known and much slandered Middle Ages, splendid examples of self-denial and devotion for the cause of religion and humanity, well calculated to fill us with admiration, and to put us to shame. For the history of the church is an uninterrupted chain of proofs, that the Lord, according to His express promise, has not forsaken His people even for a single moment, but has constantly manifested Him-self with the fulness of His divine-human life-powers, and expressed in His followers His own love, mercy, compassion and absolute devotion to the glory of God and the welfare of the human race. But an extensive history of benevolence would carry us far beyond the limits of a sermon or a tract, and we must therefore content ourselves, to pass over to our own condition, and enquire, how far and in what manner a regular system of benevolence, according to the instructions of the word of God and of the past history of the church, may be practised in our midst.

To be Continued.

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VOL. IV.—NO. III.

SYSTEMATIC BENEVOLENCE.¹

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Act. xx: 35.

Conclusion.

III. Systematic Benevolence in America.

IN the United States of North America, Church and State, as is known, are separated from each other, similarly as in the first three centuries, until Constantine the Great; with this important difference, however, that at that time the State, which was most intimately connected with heathen idolatry, did not at all legally acknowledge the Church, and even bloodily persecuted her, whilst with us both powers exist peaceably side by side of each other, and at least indirectly give to each other mutual protection. For on the one hand our religious corporations en-

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joy the protection of the civil law, as it regards person and property, and on the other hand, christianity evidently forms the moral basis and support of our republic, without which it must in a short time be dissolved in complete anarchy. We may lament indeed the religious indifferentism of our State-constitutions, so far as they are the product of the wide-spread infidelity of the last century, and cannot in any way regard the abstract separation as the normal and ultimate condition, which requires rather a harmonious union of religion and morality and the absolute, though free dominion of the christian principle over all the faculties and relations of the individual and national life, or in one word a theocracy, where God shall be all in all, and where Christ shall rule king amongst the nations as He ruleth now king in the church. Still we infinitely prefer the separation and independent position of the secular and spiritual powers, to an absolute hierarchy on the one side, and to the Erastian principle on the other, and that intermeddling of the State with the internal concerns of the church, which we find in most of the Protestant establishments or State-churches of Europe, to the injury of religion and piety; and we have every reason to be thankful to God, that the church here enjoys perfect freedom, and can discharge independently and without interruption all her own peculiar functions. For it is not seemly, that the free-born daughter of heaven, the royal Bride of the God-man and the World-Saviour, should be degraded to the maid-servant of earthly power and its temporal interests. The less the church is restricted in the possession and exercise of her innate rights, the more beneficially will she also operate upon civil society; the more she is honored as the servant of Christ, as an immediately divine institution for the salvation of the world, so much the more will she prove herself in the noblest sense, the servant of the people, as Christ Himself, the Lord of heaven, served us in His own free love and offered Himself up for us even unto death.

A natural result of this relation of peaceful neutrality between religion and politics, between Church and State in our country, and that unlimited freedom of conscience necessarily connected with it, is what is called the *voluntary* system in the support of religion. Here the church must everywhere alone take care of all her concerns, and provide for herself the necessary pecuniary means for the exercise of her duties and the attainment of her benevolent objects. She has indeed by all means the right to require from her members certain contributions for her support, and is in solemn duty bound, to present them earnestly to their

hearts and consciences, as an essential exercise of piety. But she can compel no person externally by co-ercive measures to these contributions, as the State may in collecting its taxes; on the contrary she is permitted to employ only spiritual motives, that may be applied to the conscience and the free will. For she is not a legal institution, that has its ground in a physical necessity and its end in the temporal welfare of society, as the civil commonwealth, but a moral religious community, founded upon the gospel for the spread of the glory of God, and the eternal happiness of man. She could indeed here call to her assistance the laws of the State in enforcing the payment of formal obligations and subscriptions, that have been once given her; but in doing so she would violate her own nature, sacrifice her dignity, and lose her influence among the people. The only penalties, which are at the command of the church as such, are of a moral character, namely, first private, then public admonition, and in extreme cases, exclusion from the enjoyment of the means of grace, until repentance takes place. Corporeal punishments, however, and the deprivation of civil rights proceed only from the political authority, and therefore cannot be admitted for the violation of religious duties, where the State and Church are separated from each other, except in the few cases, where the former has a common interest with the latter, as is for instance the case with us in the observation of the sabbath and monogamy.

Now this state of things has the disadvantage, that the maintenance of the church and her officers is rendered more burdensome, and the contributions of those, to a great extent, taken away, who do not stand with her in any internal connection, although they enjoy the outward blessings of christian civilization and are therefore under obligations to her. But on the other hand, the voluntary system is nevertheless in perfect harmony with the evangelical nature of the church and calls forth an amount of individual christian benevolence and sacrifice, which then again exerts a salutary influence upon other departments of the religious life. A most brilliant proof of this was furnished lately to the world by the "*Free Church of Scotland*," which, since its secession from the established church (1843,) has been thrown upon the voluntary system, and raised, in the last eight years with its eight hundred congregations, over twelve millions of dollars for ecclesiastical objects. Her contributions for missions have more than doubled those of the much more wealthy church of the State. With us too indeed the good effects of this system outweigh the many and sometimes highly

vexatious grievances, which are certainly brought upon the church by the management of her own pecuniary concerns. We should not therefore permit ourselves to be discouraged by the difficulties growing out of this condition, nor lust after the flesh-pots of a wealthy State-church, governed and paid with military precision; rather we should labor with all the moral and religious means at our command, to awaken in our congregations the proper spirit of christian love and liberality. When this *spirit* is once there, then will also gifts come in of themselves regularly and to the desired amount. But we dare never lose sight of our peculiar relations, nor go any further in our ecclesiastical legislation, than the conviction and good will of our congregations admit. In the present condition of our German people, particularly of the foreign Germans, who were accustomed in Europe to see the governments provide for all the necessities of the church, the first steps in this matter must be gentle and cautious, otherwise the nonsensical cry of priest-craft and tyranny of conscience will at once be raised. To make laws, which cannot be carried out, is very unwise, and can only serve, to undermine the respect for law and authority itself.

From this point of view, we desire the following suggestions to be considered. They are indeed mere suggestions, which we do not wish to be followed any further than present circumstances seem to make it advisable, and which may be subjected to considerable modifications by a more enlightened and experienced judgment.

We now enter upon the particular objects, for whose support a well-established religious community should feel concerned. We may divide them into three classes: 1. *Congregational* worship. 2. The *general* institutions and operations of the church. 3. The *poor*.

a. *The Maintenance of Congregational Worship.*

The maintenance of congregational worship includes the support of the pastor, the erection, preservation and repair of the church-building, the providing of sacred furniture, the care of the education of the young, in short, everything that pertains to the prosperity of the single local congregation. Here beneficence can be most demanded, and here it will be also exercised much more generally and to a greater extent, than for other purposes, as this object lies nearest to the individual and recommends itself at once to his attention.

1. The *salary of the minister* should be neither too high, nor too low, but just so large, as is necessary to secure for him a decent subsistence, one that will correspond with his station, as well as the social character of his people, and enable him at the same time, to set a good example of charity to the poor and to incite his flock to imitation. Wealth, as a rule, of which, however, there are always and everywhere honorable exceptions, is more injurious, than advantageous to the clerical rank, produces easily worldliness and cripples energy of action; if in addition covetousness and avarice are associated with it, they ruin the moral influence of the minister almost entirely and bring him into contempt. The opposite extreme of real poverty involves him, who should devote his time and strength entirely to the service of the word and the altar, in secular care, cuts him off from the means of the further improvement of his mind, to his own injury as well as to that of the congregation, and discourages him in the fulfilment of his duty. Here the maxim in the full sense is valid: "Mittelmaas ist die beste Strass," a medium is best. If in this respect we compare our congregations with some other churches, we may well recommend to them a greater degree of liberality. The ministers, in the Lutheran as well as in the Reformed Church, receive on an average a much smaller salary, than the clergy of the leading English denominations in congregations of similar means, and yet they have officially perhaps twice as much to attend to, owing to the wide extent of their charges and the frequent necessity of officiating in two languages. Would that our laity might reflect, that it is before God and the world their shame, that they often permit their spiritual shepherds to suffer for want. In the minister, the congregation honors itself, and in him it despises itself.

2. As it regards the erection and improvement of *buildings* for the exclusive use of divine services, they are indeed not absolutely necessary, as times of persecution and most missionary stations prove, for we can everywhere worship the omnipresent God in spirit and in truth. Nevertheless they are very important for the orderly continuance of a congregation, and they will therefore be erected, where circumstances admit, as in the case of the synagogues and the temple among the Jews, and according also to the general custom of the christian Church. In our land great activity has been manifested in reference to the erection of houses of worship, and for several years past a more refined taste for church-architecture has been almost generally awakened, even in those denominations, that originally proceeded from the principle of the greatest simplicity in divine service, and rejected steeples,

bells and organs entirely. Not only Roman Catholics and Episcopalians, but also Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Baptists and Methodists have begun to erect splendid and costly churches, though not seldom in singular misconception of style, or in striking contradiction between the outside and their internal arrangement. Many of our Protestant churches resemble theatres, or heathen temples of idolatry much more, than christian houses of God, whilst others are externally Gothic, i. e., medieval and catholic, but internally modern and puritanic; and have, instead of an altar, which in earlier times was looked upon as the indispensable sanctissimum, a pompous, theatrical stage for the spiritual "orator," who then makes an unnecessary and unbecoming parade and entirely absorbs the liturgus and the priest. As a general thing in our modern church-structures there is perhaps too much regard paid to fashion, secular ornament and personal comfort, while the idea of solemnity, and what tends to elevate the soul and to fill it with religious impressions, is overlooked. Many churches in our cities are almost like a fashionable parlour, which would probably rouse the indignation of Farel and John Knox, as much as once did the altars and images of Popery. The church is the house of worship, and to be a real work of art, it should indeed by its whole appearance and structure raise us from earth to heaven, and awaken in us the feeling: "Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground; this is the house of God; here is the gate of heaven."

But irrespective of such mongrel forms, in which the contradiction between modern fashion, and the traditional theology, the disharmony of the style of architecture with the idea of divine service, comes to light, in general we cannot but approve of the awakened predilection for beautiful churches, and we rejoice in every advance, which is made among us in this respect. If we build fine houses for ourselves, why not much more so for God? The best belongs to the Lord. Many indeed think, that money would be much better applied, if it were given to the poor, instead of erecting with it a dead heap of stones. So also thought Judas, the traitor, when Mary anointed the Saviour's feet with costly oil of spikenard, and concealed under this hypocritical sympathy for the poor only his own filthy avarice! The one should be done, and the other not left undone. A majestic house of worship is as it were a visible sermon, which points every attentive looker-on from earth to heaven, from the temporal to the eternal, and speaks to him in silent eloquence of the prayers and the acts of self-sacrificing love and

piety, which has heaped up stone upon stone to the honor of the Lord, and to the advancement of the devotion of His assembled people. A single Gothic dome with its spires, like so many hands pointing towards the heavenly Jerusalem, with the mysterious light and shade of its stained glass, with its majestic arches, its solemn silence, its stirring chime of bells, has from year to year, from generation to generation, from century to century, like the temple once at Jerusalem, banished innumerable worldly thoughts, animated to works of charity, and brought sinners to hesitate, and reflect upon the condition of their souls.

3. Finally to the complete prosperity of a christian congregation, belongs also a *school*; and here a new field is opened for our benevolence, upon which we can only cursorily touch. It was a beautiful custom of our fore-fathers, that they erected beside the church also a school-house, and next to the preacher of the gospel they looked about for a teacher. The church and the school are most closely connected together. The church is the mother of all popular education, and the school ought to be the nursery of the church, so that we can say: *from the house into the school, from the school into the church, from the church into heaven.* It is only when both go together hand in hand, that either can fully meet its object.

At the present time, it is true, the civilization of Europe and America, which is entirely the fruit of Christianity, has to a very considerable extent ungratefully separated itself from its maternal soil, the church, and among us a system of public schools has been erected, that stands exclusively under the supervision of the state and is, like the state itself, indifferent to religion or at least to all positive creeds. We would not deny that this arrangement may serve to awaken the slumbering faculties of the mind of our nation, and in this respect effect much good. But here if the church does not in some supplementary way interfere, we are fearful that our public schools may educate an unbelieving generation, and that the blessing of culture may be converted into a curse. For that culture only is a blessing to a people, which rests upon a sound moral and religious basis, and keeps in view the eternal interests of the immortal spirit. "Education," says a late writer on this subject in the *Bibliotheca Sacra*, Oct., 1851, p. 763, "education unbaptized and unimpregnated with the christian spirit, is not only partial and defective, it is often positively pernicious. It is a curse instead of a blessing. It is an actual training for crime, a laborious providing of dangers for the community, a conferring of power, with the positive certainty of its abuse. It disciplines the evil passions of our

nature, makes men wicked by rule, reduces vice to a system, and subjects the clear head and the strong arm to the impulse of the bad heart. The mildew of a cultivated but depraved mind, blights whatever it falls upon. It sears the souls of men. No human imagination can set bounds to the evil, either in space or duration. Through the agency of the press, it reaches other times and far distant ages." It is true we have Sunday Schools, which seek to compensate for the want of religious instruction in our elementary schools, and they truly deserve in a high degree the sympathy and active assistance of every christian and philanthropist. Yet it may with reason be doubted, whether they entirely meet the wants of the case, and whether they are capable of preventing permanently the injury referred to above. It appears to us, that the establishment of a regular system of *parochial* schools, alone can meet the pressing want, and they therefore should claim the attention of all the friends of a genuine intellectual, and at the same time moral and religious education of the people. It is high time for our classes and synods to think about it, before the waves of the unbelieving spirit of the age break over our heads, and scorn the voice of the church. Single efforts of the kind have been made already in several congregations, and have given full proofs of their importance and usefulness. Moreover if the church would sustain good schools, she must also be concerned about good school *teachers*, and also a good institution, where they may be regularly prepared for their important calling. Our public schools are to some extent precisely on this account in such a truly miserable condition, because most of the states have not at all thought of founding normal schools, and seminaries for school-teachers, and consequently have entrusted their youth to such, as have often need themselves first to learn the elements. The church could bring into existence such an institution for the education of school-teachers most easily, and with the least expense, in connection with the already existing colleges.

Still the church dare not stop here. She is not to rest satisfied with the elementary education, which should be made accessible to all persons without exception, but to urge forward also those who have talent and inclination for wider cultivation, to the higher and highest grades of mental improvement. She is, according to the testimony of history, the mother not only of popular schools, but also of colleges and universities. It therefore pertains to a complete system of education, that every ecclesiastical district, whether it be called Classis or Synod, should establish and sustain a classical Preparatory school, or as we say

in this country, an Academy; and every denomination according to its extent and wants, one or more Gymnasias or Colleges; and where circumstances permit and make it advisable even a University with all the four faculties, where the most gifted youth may be educated for the various professions. This, however, already leads us beyond the horizon of congregational wants, and it can therefore be but cursorily referred to. We will only add, that if the church wishes to do her whole duty, advance with the times in the best sense of the term, and exert a salutary influence upon the nation in every direction, she must with all her energy lay hold of the great subject of education, the cultivation of the mind and the heart, in all its grades and forms, and consecrate and sanctify it with the spirit of the gospel. Knowledge is power, and without it no denomination can expect to prosper permanently. It is among the most encouraging and hopeful facts in the history of the German Reformed and Lutheran churches in America, that zeal for education after a long slumber has in more recent times made powerful strides among them, as their academies, colleges and seminaries alone are sufficient to show, which, have sprung into existence, within the last twenty or thirty years.

4. But now the question arises, how shall the necessary means for the different branches of congregational religion be procured. Here we recommend according to the pattern of the Old Testament and of the ancient church, the giving of the *tenth*, as a *free will offering*, which from an inward impulse and with a joyful heart, may be presented to our Lord and Saviour. This arrangement originates from the all-wise God himself, and therefore needs not human recommendation and justification. It moreover commends itself also to rational reflection. It does not require from the wealthy too little, nor from the poor too much, but from each precisely in proportion to his ability, and exacts from him, who is entirely without income, no contribution at all. It would indeed be difficult to hit upon a better arrangement, than this, which proceeded from God Himself, and which has been approved and practised more or less by the christian church at all times.

But now the circumstances referred to above, in which we are placed, do not by any means permit us to make the tithe, a legal duty, and to impose it upon our congregations as a tax under threat of church discipline. This especially among our Germans would be impracticable and have the most injurious results. In this respect we dare not go further than the church in the first centuries, which indeed looked upon the tithe as binding

upon christians also, but left the actual payment of the same to the free-will of individuals. For formal laws of the church respecting it, as said above, are not found before the sixth century, and state-laws not before the eighth. All that we can do in the matter under present circumstances, is to recommend it as a gift well pleasing in the sight of God. We must make ourselves and our people familiar with the thought, that at least the tenth part of our income belongs to the Lord, from whom the blessing upon our labors proceeds, and should be expended in the promotion of His kingdom upon earth, and that we, instead of yielding to the Jews in piety and benevolence, should rather surpass them, in the same degree, in which the glory of the new covenant outshines that of the old. This obligation we may recommend even to those who are not communicant members of the church. For if they do not immediately enjoy the spiritual blessings of the same, to their own great injury, they nevertheless derive all kinds of inestimable temporal advantages from her, and the permanence and prosperity of the church is of even still greater importance for the security of their person and property, for the interest of their children and children's children, than the permanence and welfare of the State, which without the direct or the indirect influence of religion and morality, could not prosper, sustain the authority of its laws, nor least of all enjoy the blessings of freedom. As thou renderest unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's, so from these lower considerations, if not from higher religious motives, thou shouldst render unto God the things that are God's.

O, if we christians, we children of God, and heirs of eternal life, properly appreciated the innumerable favors and blessings which we daily and hourly enjoy at the hands of our heavenly father, if true thankfulness and reciprocal love for His infinite love, inflamed our hearts, we would cheerfully give Him and His church, not only the tenth, but as much of our income as we could in any way spare; yea, those examples of former times, which at present alas! have almost entirely become extinct, would then return in abundance, when wealthy youth and men, virgins and widows, in literal fulfilment of the Saviour's word, *Matth. xix: 21*, sold all their goods, devoted them to benevolent objects, and taking upon themselves their cross, followed the Lord in voluntary poverty, who when He was upon earth had no where to lay His head, and became poor that He might make us rich.

That the contribution of the tenth, if it were practised only by the greater part of christians, would suffice for all the wants

of congregational services, and the education of the young, does not well admit of a doubt in the wealthy condition of our land. Indeed there would be an important surplus remaining, which then according to the best individual judgment might be allotted to other benevolent objects, or handed over into the general treasury of the church, to be expended especially for the support of needy missionary stations. In the Free Church of Scotland, according to the proposition of the late Dr. Chalmers, the congregational contributions flow together into a general treasury of the church for the support of the ministers, from which then an equal part (150 £) is paid to each of them, in addition to what they may directly receive from their parishioners in the way of presents in proportion to their means and liberality. This plan, however, at least so far as it regards the contemplated amount of 150 £ or about \$660, has not been fully realized yet, and Dr. Chalmers shortly before his death had given up the principle of the *equal* distribution of the minister's fund, and recommended to the church a change in this respect, which will probably be made by the Assembly at some future time. In our relations, this system, however much may be said in its favor, could not be introduced, except in the case of our missionary stations, and we must therefore leave to each congregation the independent management of its own pecuniary matters.

5. In addition to the tenth, the Jews, as we have seen above, were accustomed to give to the priests a part of the *first fruits*. This model gave rise, already in the early times of the church, to the custom of presenting the minister occasionally, besides his fixed support, with free will offerings of money or produce. We consider this practice as praiseworthy in itself, and as well calculated to encourage the pastor, and to fasten more firmly the tie between him and his flock. The surplice fees, however, (*jura stolae* or *stola*, in opposition to the *jura altaris*) or regular perquisites, i. e. the obligatory pay for official acts such as baptisms, confirmations, funerals, as also the so-called confessor's fee, were unknown to christian antiquity, or directly forbidden as a species of simony (Acts viii: 18,) and came into vogue at a later period in the Greek and Roman churches, and were transplanted from these into most Protestant churches. They certainly present the danger of giving to sacred functions, a trade-like and mercenary appearance, and thereby are apt to degrade the clerical office in the eyes of the people. We cannot therefore in any way regret the abrogation of this custom in the most of our English congregations, but must at the same time maintain, that

in our European German congregations a sudden change in this respect would be imprudent, and therefore not advisable.

b. The support of the general Institutions and Operations of the Church.

The second subject of christian benevolence, are *the general institutions and operations of the church*. Among these we regard the *Theological Seminary*, the *Education of gifted and pious young men for the holy ministry*, *Domestic and Foreign Missions*.

We are not only members of a single congregation but of a confession or denomination, and through these at the same time members of the whole christian church, and we should therefore take the most lively and active part in their benevolent establishments and operations. He who interests himself merely for his own local congregation, has no conception at all of the christian church, of that communion of saints, which embraces every land and time, yea, heaven and earth; and also ignores entirely the welfare of his own particular congregation. For as the single member in the body can increase and prosper only, when the whole body is healthy, so it holds in our case. The weal and the woe, the honor and the shame, the bloom and the decline of a denomination, and of single congregations, go hand in hand. Usually, therefore, they who take no interest in the general matters and institutions of the church, are also the most negligent members of the congregation, and the reverse. Individual or personal piety must necessarily enlarge itself into congregational; congregational into denominational, or confessional; denominational, that it may not degenerate into sectarianism or party spirit, into churchly, or in a good sense, catholic piety, so as to sympathize with the entire body of Christ in all countries and times.

The object of the church of Christ in general, as also of her particular branches, or confessions, is the same as that of the incarnation of the Son of God, namely, the redemption of the world from sin and misery, the regeneration, the conversion, the sanctification, and the perfection of the whole human race, until God shall be all in all. This exalted end can be reached only through the divinely appointed means of grace, i. e. especially the preaching of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments. This again cannot be done without living organs, to whom the office of the word and altar as a duty belongs. "How

shall they believe in him, of whom they have not heard? How shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent?" (Rom. x : 14, 15.) As now further every calling, but especially so difficult and responsible an office, as that of the ministry of reconciliation, requires diligent preparation, and as further in all times, a great, if not the greatest part of the clergy, have proceeded from the lower and poorer ranks of society; it follows that the church, to reach that object, must have a care for the education of pious and promising young men for the ministerial office, that they may on the one hand preserve Christianity in congregations already established, and on the other hand carry the word of God into the domestic and foreign missionary fields to the most distant heathen. A well-grounded education for the ministerial office, requires however further a regular Theological School; and this again presupposes other schools, where elementary knowledge, the arts and sciences generally, without which theology is destitute of the necessary ground-work, shall be taught. From this appears the close, inseparable connection, in which the four above mentioned general operations of the church stand. *Foreign* missions can never flourish, without *Domestic* missions and a living zeal in the midst of Christendom itself. But whence shall the missionaries come, the ministers and shepherds for abroad and at home, if the church has no concern for their *Education*; and how shall these ministers instruct others in the word of God, if they have never enjoyed proper instruction in it themselves! And where can this necessary knowledge be obtained more readily, safely, and thoroughly, than in a *Theological Seminary*? We may therefore regard all these four branches of benevolence, as essentially one and the same interest, and also embrace their support from the same point of view.

The question now arises, what is the best method for this support, that the church may grow internally, supply itself constantly with an able after-growth of ministers, and at the same time extend ever wider and wider the boundaries of the kingdom of Jesus Christ with its innumerable blessings. For this the support of the Israelitish temple may serve us as a model. As already remarked, according to divine appointment, every Jew from twenty years and upwards, without distinction of rank and property, was obliged to contribute yearly a half shekel, or two drachms, i. e. in our currency about thirty cents, for the maintenance of the general national sanctuary, which was at first the tabernacle, and afterwards the temple at Jerusalem. "The rich shall not give more, and the poor shall not give less

than half a shekel, when they give an offering unto the Lord to make an atonement for your souls" (Exodus xxx : 13-16 ; 2 Chron. xxiv : 6). The Saviour himself with his disciples was accustomed to pay this tribute, although He, as the Son of God, and Lord of the temple, was free from this obligation (Math. xvii : 26-27).

If now the Jews under the imperfect revelation of the Old Testament, and at a time, when the value of money was much higher than at present, contributed, in addition to the tithe, the first fruits, and the free will gifts to the poor, also yearly thirty cents for the maintenance of the common centre of divine worship : should not we, under the more perfect revelation of the New Testament, in the enjoyment of the innumerable benefits of the gospel, in a rich, free and happy land, be cheerfully prepared to contribute, the relatively smaller amount of at least fifty cents yearly for all the general objects of the church, to which we belong? At present the burden of supporting our Seminary, our Educational and Missionary interests, falls upon a small part of our members, while hundreds and thousands give themselves no concern about them at all. By the introduction, however, and the carrying out of a general rule, this inequality would be adjusted, from no one would too much be required, and yet on the whole much more would come in than at present. The number of communicant members in the Reformed church is estimated at 80,000 at least. If every one would throw into the general treasury of the church at least half a dollar a year, we should obtain \$40 000, with which we might in a short time firmly endow our Literary Institutions, double and treble our missionary operations, and at the same time educate for the gospel ministry a much greater number of pious young men, than is alas! at present the case. In the Lutheran church, which, numerically considered, according to the statistical reports, is at least twice as strong, the income of course would be twice as much. We would, however, to be safe, at first propose only twenty five cents as an average contribution from each member, leaving it of course free to each, to give more if he is able and willing. Even in this case, much more would come into the general treasury of the church, than as yet has been the case either among Lutherans, or Reformed, or the German Evangelical associations, and our general objects of benevolence, could without any difficulty be sustained.

The most convenient time to pay over these contributions to the minister, or the consistory would be on the Sundays, upon which the Holy Communion is administered, which in our con-

gregations usually takes place four times a year. In order, however, to make this system definite, and to give it the necessary regularity and promptitude, it would be necessary, to appoint a *General Treasurer* of the church, whose business it would be to see, that the contributions be punctually paid over to him by the ministers, and that then the monies thus coming in be devoted to the four branches of the general activity of the church, according to the necessities of each, under the supervision of the Synod, or a Synodical committee with proper security.

Should this proposal of a *yearly contribution of not less than twenty five cents for every communicating member*, not meet with approbation, we then know of no better plan to propose, than to appoint *yearly collections* for each of the four above mentioned objects of benevolence, without specifying any definite amount; a plan which has already often been recommended by Synod, and also partially carried out, but never so regularly and universally, as we could wish. For these collections communion seasons and especially the days of the harvest-sermon would suit best.

c. *The Support of the Poor.*

The third object of christian benevolence is the care of the *poor* and the *distressed*. "The poor ye have always with you," says the Saviour. God permits the difference of property in human society to continue, partly in order to exercise the poor in humility, in contentment, in thankfulness, in freedom from envy, and to raise their minds from earth to heaven and to the imperishable treasures of the kingdom of God, which are always accessible to them; partly to give the rich a constant opportunity for the exercise of love and benevolence. The Holy Scriptures are full of injunctions to this virtue, and annex to it the most precious promises. "He that hath pity upon the poor, lendeth unto the Lord, and that which he hath given, will he repay him again," says already the Old Testament; and the Saviour promises to reward richly in the great day of account even a drink of water, given to the thirsty. Hence the church at all times has interested herself with peculiar affection and concern in the poor, the sick and the destitute of every description. The proofs thereof are the numberless asylums for the poor, for widows and orphans, for the sick and for strangers, and similar benevolent institutions, by which christian lands and

nations have distinguished themselves so favorably above the territories of heathenism.

In this department of benevolence, a rival of the church has grown up in the numerous *secret societies*, which of late have increased powerfully, and not without the fault of the church itself, which has partly neglected her duty and obligation, or only half discharged it. We do not mean in this to condemn these associations in and of themselves, as little as the public schools. In their own way they may be very commendable and useful, and may contribute to the promotion of certain virtues, provided they do not pass beyond their sphere and put themselves in the place of the church and positive Christianity, as it seems to be the tendency at least of some of them to do. In the last case, their blessing would as certainly be turned into a curse, as the public schools must operate perniciously, so soon as they rise up in a hostile attitude towards religion, and promote infidelity. But irrespective of these possible dangers and consequences, we must in the first place deny, that secret societies are of a *benevolent* character, in the strict sense of the term, although they are usually represented as such. They are much more at bottom mutual insurance-companies, whose members in case of sickness receive pay for services rendered, namely the interest for their weekly or monthly contributions, and are of course held together by the principle of self-preservation and self-interest. Beyond the circle of contributing members and their families, the charity of these associations does not at all extend, and therefore they can never take the place of the church. For the gifts of christian love and charity are free and unmerited, and are extended for the most part directly to those, who are excluded from the benefit of those societies, for the reason of their inability to fulfil the necessary pecuniary conditions. Nay, where the mitigation of plain bodily necessity is concerned, love does not stop first to ascertain the amount of moral desert, although the mode and manner of its relief are indeed governed by a wise regard to the character of the subject. It resembles the good Samaritan, who forgetting his national hatred, had compassion on the Jew that had fallen among murderers, and took care of him with the utmost devotion, whilst the Priest and the Levite passed by him with cold indifference. It imitates its author, God Himself, who maketh His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust.—But then it is not satisfied with the removal of mere bodily want: this is to be rather only the bridge to a higher moral and religious labor of love. For Providence sends poverty and sickness, to turn

our attention to our internal miseries, to the much greater want of our souls, and to lead us to true spiritual riches, to the possession of the treasures, which neither moth nor rust can corrupt. This pedagogic end of evil, however, no society can reach, but the Christian Church, which God Himself has established, and to which alone, He has promised everlasting duration.

Hence it is the sacred duty of every individual congregation, which professes the Lord Jesus Christ, the great physician of body and soul, to take care of the poor and destitute, especially in their own midst, with self-denying and self-sacrificing love. It were a horrible disgrace, if the church should be willing to leave this work to the state, or to philanthropic societies, which cannot carry it out in the right way, nor with proper success.

In what way now shall this duty be exercised by each congregation in a systematic manner? We have upon this the fruitful suggestion of the apostle Paul, who made the regulation in the churches of Asia Minor and Greece, that every member on the first day of the week, i. e., on Sunday should, according to the measure of his income, lay by him in store, a contribution for the poor in Palestine, that there might be no gatherings when he came, (1 Cor. xvi: 1-2). From this we see: 1. That the contributions for the poor should take place regularly *every week*, especially on every *Sunday*, when we forget earthly cares and are reminded by the preaching of the gospel of the numberless blessings of God, and stimulated to every good work. 2. That the duty of giving is *general*, and therefore extends not only to the wealthy, but also to all who have any thing to spare, however little it may be. The Macedonian Christians were precisely on this account praised by the apostle Paul, because they themselves notwithstanding their great poverty, contributed above their ability to that fair work of love, (2 Cor. viii: 1ff). It is the duty of every believer to pray, and so also to exercise love and to do good according to his ability. 3. That the amount of benevolent contributions is to be determined by the *ability*. Every one should give conscientiously, in proportion to his profit and to the temporal blessing bestowed upon him by God, remembering, that he must at one time before the everlasting judgment seat render an account, as for every word, that he has spoken, (Matth. xii: 34) so also for every cent which he receives. He who cannot give more, let him extend at least his mite, like the poor widow, who will be praised on that account, as long as the gospel resounds. "If thou hast abundance, give alms accordingly; if thou hast but a little, be not afraid to give according to that little," Tobit iv: 9. To whom much has

been given, of him also will much be required, and to whom little has been given, of him little will be required.

In most of our congregations, especially in the European German, it is a beautiful ancient custom, on every Sunday after divine worship to take up a cent collection. This was originally designed for the poor, and doubtless took its rise out of that apostolic ordinance; in many cases, however, it has been alienated from this object, and applied to the paying of the minister, and the necessary expenses of divine worship. Let us provide for these wants in some other way, return to that old christian custom, and with earnestness and zeal discharge our sacred obligations to the poor.

The proper managers of the alms of every congregation are the *Deacons* under the supervision of the minister and the elders. According to their original appointment, they were the overseers of the sick and the poor, as we learn from the sixth chapter of the Acts and from the subsequent history of the church. Our deacons for the most part alas! have become estranged from this duty, and there is hardly a shadow thereof remaining. This is a foul stain upon our church-organization, that should claim our most earnest consideration. We have no good reason to pride ourselves upon the apostolic character of our government, so long as our Deacons confine themselves to the business of carrying around on the Sabbath the purse, and of collecting the salary of the minister. For that purpose, the apostles would hardly have instituted a particular office in the church with a solemn ordination and installation.

Corresponding to the office of Deacons in the apostolic church, and onwards until in the thirteenth century, was the office of *Deaconesses* for poor and sick females of the congregation. Thus Paul mentions the deaconess Phoebe in Cenchrea with praise, (Rom. xvi : 1). Females have received particular gifts from the Lord, which should be organized and employed for the benefit of the church. It would therefore be of importance to revive that office; and to maintain thus an evangelical counter-part to the Roman Catholic institution of *Sisters of Charity*, founded A. D., 1634 by Vincent of Paul, which has already dried up innumerable tears, healing the wounds and soothing the pains of both body and soul. Yea, why should not every ecclesiastical district have an Asylum for the poor, the sick, orphans, and widows, where together with bodily help the comfort of eternal life might be imparted to the suffering. The restoration of the office of Deacons to its original significance, the revival of the similar office of Deaconesses and of the whole

ecclesiastical care of the sick and the poor, would render secret societies unnecessary, or at all events entirely harmless to the church, and remove the reproach, that she neglected works of charity, which Christ and His apostles impressed so urgently upon her, and which she in past times so abundantly practised. As truly as we are justified according to Paul by faith in the Saviour, so firmly on the other hand stands the word of James: "Faith without works is dead."

If now we comprise in a few words the result of this discussion, we would recommend: 1. In general sustained by the example of the Old Testament and of the first centuries of the christian church, the consecration of the one tenth part of our income—yet not as a legal requirement, but as a free-will offering—for religious and benevolent objects primarily in our own neighborhood, and then for the kingdom of God at large; 2. A special yearly contribution of not less than twenty-five cents for the general institutions and operations of our denomination, according to the Old Testament model of supporting the national sanctuary, Ex. xxx: 13-16; 3. A collection on every Sabbath for the benefit of the poor and the destitute, according to the apostolic direction, 1 Cor. xvi: 1-2, in connection with the revivification of the office of Deacons and Deaconesses. As it regards the application and distribution of the tenth to the different objects of divine worship, and the general activity of the church, as also with regard to the amount of contribution to the poor, every one must take counsel with his conscience, and act according to his means and his best judgment, remembering the account which he owes to God for all His gifts and benefits, and their faithful use.

In conclusion, we add a few *practical* remarks which every reader may carry out further for himself.

1. It is high time, for the German Churches in America to free themselves of the charge of penuriousness and covetousness, which hitherto has been attributed to them, and to emulate with all their strength the leading English denominations in the virtue of benevolence and liberality in the spread of the kingdom of God at home and abroad. Of course there are many, who are very liberal and yet strangers to the life of God and full of Pharisaic hypocrisy; but it is impossible that true piety should exist together with hard-heartedness and covetousness, which in the Holy Scripture is called a root of all evil. Economy is a virtue, for which the Germans especially are distinguished, but

covetousness is a vice, one of the most hateful forms of selfishness, by which man becomes at last as cold and heartless, as the stone and metal, on which he has set his affections. The example of the Moravian Society, which is almost entirely German, and has accomplished more comparatively for heathen missions than any other denomination, as also of the liberality of single individuals in almost all the German Churches, prove satisfactorily, of what devotion and self-sacrifice in this department the German is capable, when he is once properly inflamed with the fire of divine love, and awakened to a consciousness of his sacred duty. Then he also is known to give out of a full heart and out of pure love to God and man, and only such a giver is acceptable to the Lord.

2. Let us reflect, that liberality for the holy cause of truth, virtue and godliness has never as yet brought any person to beggary, but according to the express promise of the infallible God, will even in time be blessed. When the Jews, under the old covenant, conscientiously paid their tithes and other contributions, they were prosperous, and had abundance; when they withheld from the Lord the gifts that belonged to Him, they only robbed themselves, and had to repent of it bitterly. At the present day, precisely the most liberal nations, as the English and the Scotch, are the most blessed with earthly prosperity, and it would be a very superficial view, if we should derive this last from their flourishing trade and commerce only, without any reference to the state of religion and morality among them. For why are other lands, which are much more favored by nature, and which once acted a more prominent part in the history of the world, but now morally ruined, also in an external aspect so distracted and full of poverty and misery?

3. Much greater, however, is the inward reward of benevolence, the serenity of conscience, the divine pleasure resulting from the consciousness of having done good. Active, self-devoting, self-sacrificing love is indeed one of the richest and purest sources of true happiness, and he, who closes his ear to the cries of the poor and the frequent claims of benevolence, robs himself in so doing of the noblest enjoyments, of which we can partake in this world. True indeed this joy is not seldom imbibed by the ingratitude and the unworthiness of the subjects, to whom we do good; but this should as little dishearten us, as the sower is discouraged, because some seeds of grain fall inevitably upon the hard way-side, others upon rocky ground, and others still are choked by the thorns and thistles. The greater part of seed, when it is carefully sown, falls nevertheless upon

good ground, and brings forth abundantly, some thirty-fold, some sixty-fold, and some an hundred-fold.

4. If we ministers of the gospel expect greater zeal from our congregations in exercising the virtue of benevolence, then let us consider, that we shall reach this object best, if we set before them the light of a good example. We are by no means excepted from the duty of exercising the duty of love, compassion and benevolence, rather in this precisely lies our strength. It is true, our first and principal duty is to devote our mental powers, and all our time to the Lord; but this does by no means exclude the less important bodily gifts. Let us take an example from among apostolic men of modern and ancient times. *John Wesley* made it a rule to be satisfied with 2*£.*, and to devote what was over to benevolent objects; in the first year he devoted 2*£.*, in the succeeding year 32*£.*, in the fourth 92*£.*, to the support of the poor, and so on; so that he gave much more away than he used for himself. Think of *Augustus Hermann Franke*, who notwithstanding his small means, accomplished incredible things, won for himself one of the first positions among the noblest philanthropists, and in his Orphan-House, at Halle, erected an imperishable monument of love to mankind, of faith in God, of devotion and perseverance. We will also not disdain to learn from that brilliant example of Roman Catholic piety, *Charles Borromeo*, the founder of Sabbath Schools so greatly blessed, whose charitableness almost surpasses description, who as Arch-Bishop of Milan, gave yearly the third part of his income to the poor, applied another third to the building and repairing of churches, and besides founded ten colleges, five hospitals, and a multitude of other benevolent institutions; whilst as for himself he lived in apostolic simplicity and humility, denied himself all comforts, at last even his own bed, and found his greatest pleasure in visiting the huts of misery, of poverty and sickness, and in giving counsel, comfort and aid to the needy and suffering. How we must blush, when we compare ourselves with the apostle *Paul*, who during the day preached the gospel, and in the still hours of night labored with his hands for his own and his companions' support, that he might not be burdensome to the congregations, and to leave them and all ministers of the gospel a lofty example of self-denying love for imitation! But above all we would hold out to view, the most sublime model of all virtue and piety, our adorable *Saviour*, to whom these and all saints look up with reverence and humility, from whom they receive all power for good, who exchanged His divine majesty for earthly poverty, to make us rich, who during

His earthly life, had no where to lay his head, that we might thereby be made partakers of His eternal glory!

5. Finally, however, we would not forget, that the chief matter and the first duty of the Christian in the end after all is to devote *himself*, his person, his heart, and his life to the Lord, who died for him, and that all other gifts of love lose their worth, when they do not flow from this great personal offering and from a living union with Christ. We may indeed overvalue external charity, if we separate it from its proper fountain. The apostle speaks of a sacrifice, that bestows all its goods upon the poor, and gives the body to be burned, but which after all is destitute of true charity, and therefore it profiteth nothing, (1 Cor. xiii : 3). Out of a living union of our whole person with Christ, alone sprout genuine piety and virtue, and with it also genuine charity and benevolence. If we have once surrendered ourselves, our heart and life to the Lord, then it will be a small thing for us, to devote our money, this dust of the earth, to His kingdom. Therefore let us,—this is the surest way to systematic benevolence,—above all things labor with this end in view, to present ourselves and our congregations as a living sacrifice to the Lord, and to be as closely united to Him as the branch to the vine, the member to the head, so that we shall no more live, but Christ live, think and will in us, speak and testify out of us, and work and accomplish through us acts of seeking and saving love. Ministers and laymen of the German Reformed Church, let us not only commit to memory, but lay to heart, and act out in our lives, that precious answer to the first question of our excellent Heidelberg Catechism: “That I with body and soul, both in life and death, am not my own, but belong to my faithful Saviour Jesus Christ.”

Mercersburg, Pa.

P. S.