

James M'Cosh.

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SUSTENTATION OF THE GOSPEL MINISTRY.

BY JAMES M'COSH, LL.D., D.D.,

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THE DUTY OF IRISH PRESBYTERIANS.

I THINK it right to say at once, that I am not to enter on the discussion of my subject in a spirit of controversy. The time has come for true Presbyterians forgetting their past quarrels, and inquiring what they can do for the good of their Church. I was not afraid, as the public knows, to give my opinion on disputed questions in London, Scotland, and Ulster, when a purpose was to be served by it in the way of stopping the promiscuous endowment of all sects. But I am awed by the crisis to which we have come, and have no heart to fight old battles. I feel that we have a great work to do, and I am not to be tempted to come down to miserable wrangling. We have all a responsible part to act; and I tremble lest I take a false step. Fortunately we are now beyond theoretical discussion, and have to face a great practical question, fitted not to divide, but to combine us.

It must surely be very satisfactory to Presbyterians in Ireland to find that they are shut up into a well-defined path of duty at this particular time—in fact, that there is a way hedged in for them, as it were, by thorns, so that they cannot turn to either side without danger. In 1867, the alternative was before the nation, Are we to endow all sects in Ireland, or endow none? The national representatives for a time hesitated between the two. But when Earl Russell formally announced that he had a plan of endowing all, the constituents in England and Scotland spoke out plainly to their members, and told them that the time for this was over; and now in 1868, a decided majority of the House of Commons representing, no doubt, the sentiments of the people before whom, as they know, they must soon appear, has thrice declared that they are peacefully but firmly to disestablish all religious bodies in Ireland. True, there is a powerful minority prepared to resist this; but Earl Mayo has declared plainly for them that they

can do so only by placing all denominations in Ireland on the same level.* There is thus no choice left us but the two : endow Romanism alongside of Protestantism, or, preserving existing personal rights, let every Church be thrown upon its own resources.

And surely no Evangelical Protestant pleading the name of Luther, or of Ussher, no orthodox Presbyterian claiming an ecclesiastical descent from Knox, will hesitate between the two. By taking the one side, we are avoiding "much transgression,"—we are placing ourselves in the same position as the Church was for the first three centuries, as the churches are in the United States, in Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, in all of which religion is in quite as healthy a state, in respect both of purity and zeal, as in this country; in the same position as the Free Church of Scotland and as the Nonconformist churches in Great Britain. By taking the other side, we are identifying ourselves with error, and become "partakers of other men's sins;" we are allowing the nation to put truth and error on the same footing (we may seem to be levelling up the churches, but we are levelling down the truth); we are bringing our statesmen into circumstances of great temptation, in which it will not be easy for them to maintain a clear conscience; we are reducing our Protestant churches to the same condition as the dead state-endowed churches on the Continent of Europe; and doing as much as in us lies to slacken their zeal, in opposing infidelity on the one hand, and an enslaving superstition on the other.

I am aware that there are persons to be found in Ulster who have reasoned themselves into the belief that a third course is possible. They would reform and keep up the Established Church, and retain and increase the *Regium Donum*, and yet keep Catholics in their present position of inferiority. But of the 650 representatives of the nation, certainly not 100, perhaps nor 50, would patiently listen to such a proposal in these times. Presbyterians should be on their guard lest, in throwing the weight of their influence into this third and now impossible alternative, they be not, without meaning it, helping the side that would endow all; lest they be not virtually saying to statesmen, "Go on with your plan and we will be silent;" and find, when their eyes are opened, that

* Lord Mayo said, "There would not, I believe, be any objection to make all churches alike; but that result must be secured by elevation, not by confiscation."

they have been led by knowing men to save the *thus* degraded Church of Ireland, and a *Donum* on which no blessing can *then* rest, by endowing popery.

I can perfectly understand how there should be persons who conscientiously deplore the tide of occurrences which has been flowing so rapidly these last few months, and who look on the coming events with apprehension, and pray that they may not come in their day. As having been the minister of an Established Church, with glorious historical recollections of heroic deeds and noble martyrs, I can enter into the feelings of those who, whether in the Presbyterian or Episcopal Churches, shrink from the very thought of snapping asunder the cord that binds them to the State, reckoned by them as a fostering mother. That there should be country ministers who, with their congregations, are timid, and perhaps alarmed, in present circumstances, I can easily apprehend; and I do most thoroughly sympathise with them in consequence of having passed through a like experience of anxiety and of fear, when, at the call of principle, I gave up all that I had from the Government, without any assurance that the people would support me. I can comprehend how there should be many afraid lest the Gospel ministry should not be adequately supported on the voluntary principle—only they must take care that this does not arise from any fault of theirs. I can conceive Protestants grieving that our nation should seem to be abandoning its testimony in behalf of Bible truth—only they will surely be so far pleased that it is not allowed to go a step farther and countenance anti-scriptural error. On the other hand, I know that there are not a few who are rejoicing in these events, and blessing God that their lot has been cast in such times: when they may have a part to act worthily of the Protestant and Presbyterian blood that is in them; as believing that the churches will be set free to enter upon a new and a noble career; and that one other chance is to be opened for the advance of Protestantism in Ireland, by the removal of a stumbling-block in the breasts of Catholics—only I would have such persons mingle trembling with their mirth, lest, after all, we suffer a shipwreck in the storm. But, whether sorry or glad, all Presbyterians may thank God that in His providence he has determined our position for us, without, I may add, our being very much consulted. Our duty is a practical, and I think a very clear one, not so much to consider whether the circumstances in which we find

ourselves, without, perhaps, much fault or much credit on our part are for good or for evil, but what we should do in the circumstances, and in particular what we should do to secure that there be an adequate support for the Gospel ministry in the land.

It so happens that in the Providence of God I have been called to consider the way in which the ministry of the Word is supported in various countries. First, from having travelled rather extensively in the United States of America, I know how the public ordinances of religion are sustained in that country, On one point I am able to give a satisfactory testimony. The voluntary principle seems perfectly capable of supplying the ordinances of religion in the most remote regions of that wide continent. I remember entering a village with about 400 or 500 people 130 miles beyond the Mississippi, and at least 1600 miles from the eastern seaboard, and away on the very outskirts of civilization, and I found there not one, but four or five churches belonging to different denominations, each ready to do the Master's work in new districts. This may, no doubt, seem so far an evil in the first instance, as the congregations instead of helping were rather hindering each other. But the evil is only temporary; in the meantime the ministers are going out as missionaries, into the still more thinly inhabited regions beyond, and five years hence the place will contain as many thousands as it does hundreds at present, and there will be room for all the laborers. What I saw there is general in all the distant parts of America. It is of importance to mention this, as there are some terrifying us with the thought that, if our endowments be withdrawn, the remote parts of Ireland will be left without a gospel ministry, and in a state of spiritual destitution. I am prepared to declare that this has not taken place in America, where the zeal of the churches has kept pace with the rapidly-increasing population; and I am confident that it will not be allowed to occur in our country, where the field is so much narrower, and where the energy of the churches in Ireland, backed by the churches in England and in Scotland, will not allow a single church or station to go down, or the most thinly scattered population to be without the means of grace.

This, however, is all the lesson I can draw from America. Otherwise I was not very favorably impressed with the system adopted there. In the wealthy congregations of the great cities, the ministers are highly remunerated, some of them having as much

as £1000 or £1500 a year. But in the villages the ordinary stipend seems to be between 800 and 1000 dollars, that is, from £150 to £200 a year, which is a small sum in that country; and very many have a much smaller salary, being in fact not so well paid as an ordinary skilled mechanic. It is a favorable circumstance that the churches are alive to the evil, and are seeking to remedy it: and I was asked on all hands to give information as to the system of the Free Church of Scotland. The Old School Presbyterian Church (consisting of 2400 congregations) in particular asked me to address them on the subject, and appointed a committee which, so far as I know, is yet sitting to consider the whole subject. The method adopted by the Dissenters of England and Scotland labors under the same defects as the American plan—that is, overfeeds some and starves others. I am glad to find that the United Presbyterian Church of Scotland has consented, in the event of a union being consummated between it and the Free Church, to fall in with the principle of a common Central Fund. When so many Christian Churches are looking towards the method in operation in the Scottish Free Church, it may not be impertinent in me to give some account of it to those who have to consider what should be done for the decent maintenance of the Presbyterian ministers in Ireland.

It is because I wish the Presbyterian Church here to avoid the evils of the old Dissenting plan in Great Britain, and of the American plan, that I am anxious to have an opportunity of speaking of a better way. The old plan leaves every congregation to provide the ordinances of religion for itself, the poor congregations being in some cases helped, often in an eleemosynary and rather a degrading way, by a fund subscribed by the wealthier congregations. But it is surely more in accordance with the spirit of Christianity in general, and of Presbyterianism in particular, that the ministers of the Word should be more on a footing of equality, and that they should be put in a position to “bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.” I confess that I have a fear that, unless our ministers and our more intelligent members come forward at this time to enlighten and prepare the people, our Church, to the great loss of the country brethren, will be thrown upon the old Dissenting and American plan, instead of the new and better way to which so many free churches throughout the world are now looking. I am sorry to find that at this present

time there are some proposing that when the *Donum* is gone, the Assembly, instead of favoring the share-and-share-alike system of a General Sustentation Fund, should simply pass an imperative Act requiring every congregation to raise £50 instead of £30, as a condition of qualification, and add this £50 to the sum left to each minister by the State—eking out the sum in poor congregations by a Fund for weak congregations called by a dignified name. Now, I cannot conceive a more inexpedient measure than this: one more likely to arrest the liberality of the people at a certain point, that is at £50, and thus keep down the stipends at the present low level, when we have a tide which might be made to raise them to a higher.

But let me not be misunderstood, as to the object which I have in view in describing the method and management of the General Sustentation Fund of the Free Church of Scotland. I do not insist that the scheme should be followed implicitly by the Presbyterian Church in Ireland. Nor am I at this stage to lay down a plan cut and dry for sustaining the ministry of our Church. All that I aim at, is to give a clear account of an organised system which, with the blessing of Heaven, has been thoroughly successful. At the crisis to which we have come, we are at liberty, nay, we are required, to look at what other churches have done. When the Disruption in the Church of Scotland was impending, Dr. Chalmers, I happen to know, consulted with Dr. Bunting, the able leader of the Wesleyan body, as to how they kept up the spirit of liberality among the Methodists. We are surely entitled in like manner to inquire what our sister Church in Scotland has done, and we may profit by the very valuable experience through which she has passed. And, as to a fixed plan, it is to be devised and sanctioned, not by individuals, but by the General Assembly, after it knows the circumstances in which it is to be placed, and has all available information before it.

The General Sustentation Fund of the Free Church of Scotland was instituted to meet a great emergency, the Disruption of the Church of Scotland in 1843. It was devised by the statesmanlike genius of Dr. Chalmers; and for many years past has been administered by the Rev. Dr. Buchanan, of Glasgow, a man of great wisdom and admirable judgment. It seems, if properly wrought, to be capable of accomplishing all the purposes of an Established Church without the evils which have always, in fact, clung to such an institution.

The mode of raising the Fund is easily understood. Every congregation has a Deacon's Court, corresponding to the Congregational Committee in the Irish Presbyterian Church, only it embraces the ministers and all the elders, as well as others elected by the members. The office of this Court is to take charge of the secular affairs of the congregation, very specially the gathering of the money for the general fund. This Court takes steps to have every member of the Church waited on, and invited to say what he or she will engage to give to the General Fund; and then each Deacon, or some person for him—very frequently a female—goes round the district, and waits on the contributors, to take up their subscriptions weekly, monthly, or quarterly, as they may prefer—the weekly visits being found commonly to be more effective with working people, and the monthly or quarterly with persons of a higher status. The sum thus raised is transmitted monthly to the Church's office in Edinburgh. It is astonishing with what regularity the moneys come in, first to the Deacon's Court, and then to the Central Fund—in fact, the Chancellor of the Exchequer does not get his taxes by the arm of the law nearly so regularly as the Convener of the Sustentation Fund gets his gifts by the trained liberality of the people.

It is understood that in every congregation the first effort and the main effort should be directed in the way of supporting this great Church fund. If it fails in its duty in this respect, the Presbytery, and, if need be, the General Sustentation Fund Committee, deals with it, always, however, by moral means, fitted to be addressed to Christian men and women, and never by ecclesiastical excision. Of course, if a congregation resists all these appeals, it is apt to be reproached by its neighbours, and sinks in public estimation, and may find itself in difficulties in the event of a vacancy created by the minister removing or dying.

In the years 1843-44, the total Sustentation Fund raised was £61,513, out of which 470 Disruption ministers drew the full dividend of £105, and other ministers joining the Church a smaller sum. Since that time the Fund has gradually, and, upon the whole, steadily increased. In 1867, the sum amounted to £120,000, that is nearly double what it was in 1844, giving £144 to every minister; and it is certain that this year it will be £130,000, yielding £150 to every minister, with a surplus divided in a manner to be afterwards explained. The total raised for the Sustentation Fund since

1843 amounts to the sum of £2,535,067 : an enormous sum to be given by about one-third of the population of Scotland.

Down till this year, every minister, whether belonging to a poor or a rich congregation, received his equal dividend. This has tended greatly to keep up a presbyterial equality among the ministers, and a cheerful spirit among the congregations. There have been discussions from time to time, as to whether the more liberal aid-giving congregations should not get back more than others, as an encouragement and a stimulus to exertion. When I was in the Free Church, I always stuck stiffly by the principle of an equal dividend, which has been sustained by the general voice of the Church. It is a happy circumstance that it has been so ; for we have now, in perfect consistency with the principle of an equal dividend, a scheme for increasing the Sustentation Fund, sanctioned by last Assembly, and already in operation, apparently with the most satisfactory results. Every congregation, be it poor or be it rich, is to receive £150 for its minister ; but, to keep the contributions from becoming stereotyped, and to encourage more liberal congregations, it is arranged that the surplus of the annual revenue, over and above what may be necessary to give £150 to each other minister, shall be so distributed that congregations, which shall contribute the average amount of 10s. or more per member, shall receive an equal share of that surplus ; while those who contribute from 7s. 6d. to 10s. per member, shall receive half a share ; while those contributing less than 7s. 6d. get nothing beyond the £150. I need not enter into farther details as to this scheme, as it must be some time before the Irish Church can be in circumstances to take advantage of it. It is enough to say that the new rule has given such a spring to the Fund that it is now certain that, in May, 1868, every minister will receive £150, and that there will remain a considerable surplus to be divided among the ministers of liberal congregations.

In many poor congregations the people find that they can do nothing in the way of supporting the ministry beyond contributing to this general fund, and keeping up the decent worship of God in their churches by means of the ordinary Sabbath collections. But in the wealthier congregations the people, after subscribing duly to the central fund, add a supplement to the stipend of their ministers—in some cases very small, in others very considerable—to so much, in a few cases as £500. The whole sum paid a year ago

in the form of supplementary stipends, was £40,332 : the average stipend in the 178 town congregations is £316 ; and the average stipend over the whole church is fully £200 a-year, equal, I believe, to that of the Church of Scotland. These supplementary stipends being reported to the church, and carefully watched, are not found to be injurious to the grand central fund. I have to add that, in the country congregations, the ministers have manses and gardens, and in some cases glebes, sufficient to keep a horse to enable them to do their work, and a cow for the benefit of their families.

In the meanwhile, the effort made in this direction has not lessened their liberality in any other ; on the contrary, the hearts of the people have thereby been opened, and their gifts have flowed out in every channel in which the generosity of a Christian people should flow. Every congregation has Sabbath-schools sustained by it, and nearly every congregation has one or more ordinary week-day schools ; and not a few congregations keep a Scripture-reader or a missionary. I remember that we were told, by people who wished to have a pretext for remaining in the Established Church, that, if we gave up our State revenues, there could be nothing left for missions ; but we found, instead, that our missions at home and abroad were sustained more liberally than ever. We were told, too, by men who affected to be wise and deeply interested in the welfare of the Church, that, though we might keep what we had, we should never be able to extend our operations. Well, there were 470 ministers who came out at the Disruption, and now, in 1868, the number of congregations is 930, including 54 congregations not yet sanctioned as ministerial charges. The total sum raised by the Free Church in the twenty-five years of its existence is upwards of *eight millions*, being, I venture to say, one of the noblest gifts ever laid by a people on the altar of Him who, “though He was rich, yet for our sakes became poor.” And I am here to testify, what I know from my residence among them for years, and my occasional visits to them since I left, that all this has been contributed cheerfully—and “the Lord loveth a cheerful giver.” I never yet met any man, woman, or child among my old people who expressed a regret at the part we had taken together. Most of them, when we meet, break out in thanks to God for the share He enabled them to take in what they believe has turned out eminently for the glory of God and the good of His Church.

They part with no money so cheerfully as that which they give to the support of the ministry in their Church; and the servant women, and the weavers, and the day laborers, tell me that they have never, in consequence of supporting this cause, been deprived of a single necessary, or even comfort of life, or felt themselves poorer. And, now that a new race has sprung up, the parents belonging to the former generation assure me that it has been greatly for the good of their children that they have been taught to give their spare money to good objects, instead of vanity and intemperance; that thereby they have been saved from many temptations and from much evil; and been trained to good habits, and surrounded by high and elevating associations, historical, social, and religious, which have raised them to a standard of character which they could never otherwise have attained, and are handing down the best characteristics of the country to future generations.

We had to do all our work in the midst of difficulties, which were often felt by us to be almost overwhelming. First, as a more urgent work than even the support of the ministry, we had to build in one year 500 churches in which to house our congregations—the Free Church has had to erect in all about 1,000 churches. Then, we had to deal with a people who were accustomed to have the ordinances of religion paid for them by the State, and many of whom had never given anything to the cause of Christ, except, perhaps, the smallest silver coin once a year for missions. We had thrown upon us small country congregations, consisting, perhaps, of a few small farmers and farm servants, coming out with, perhaps, their aged minister on the ground of principle, and righteously—yes, *righteously*—claiming to be sustained by us. We had a still greater burden—and yet it was one of our honors, I had almost said our very crown. We had a host of Gaelic congregations (the number is at present 168), with a poor people scattered in remote glens, and over heather mountains, but standing resolutely—like their rocks—to their principles, in opposition to their chieftains, and often with all the large tenant-farmers frowning upon them. We bore all this cheerfully, for it was one of our triumphs that the poor, as a general rule, stuck by us. But we had sorer trials to test our patience, and the great heart of Dr. Chalmers was at times almost ready to sink under them. We had selfish people among the rich, who would not contribute according

to their wealth, and who kept down the standard of giving in their whole neighbourhood. We had hosts of poor who leaned on the rich, and who, because they could not do much, excused themselves from doing anything. We had selfish congregations lavishing their wealth on themselves, on their ministers, on their churches, and in keeping up a shewy and expensive public worship: and we had selfish ministers who allowed and encouraged all this. Then we had poor congregations who expected the wealthy congregations to bear them up while they did little or nothing. This was the great difficulty felt by Dr. Chalmers a year or two after the Disruption. He had succeeded in exciting a spirit of giving both among the rich and poor in our towns; but not a few country congregations, away from the means of information and the stimulus of public opinion, were dragging down others, by hanging on them as a dead weight: and the rich were threatening to curtail their gifts, because they saw that the poor were trusting to them instead of exerting themselves. I remember a conversation which took place between him and a Highland minister about that time. "You must," said the minister, "get the people in towns to give, for we people in the country can do nothing." The Doctor allowed the conversation to pass away to another topic for a time and then addressed the Highlandman. "I suppose nearly your whole people have come out." The minister was proud to be able to report that of a thousand people not a score had remained behind, and the Doctor congratulated him. "But how many public-houses have you in your parish?" "Oh, too many," was the reply. "But how many?" asked the catechizer, and drew out reluctantly that there were three, mainly supported by the 980 members of the Free Church. "Well," said Dr. Chalmers "these must cost the people annually from £50 to £100 a piece. "And don't they chew, and smoke, and snuff," and was answered that they did. "Then it is clear that your people give at least £200 for such stimulants. How much do they give for ministerial support," and was answered some £20 or £30. "Go home," said Dr. Chalmers "to your people and ask them to give half as much for Christ as they give for whiskey and tobacco, and then come and ask others to do something for you." People looking now and from a distance at the success of the Free Church are apt to feel as if the work must have been accomplished easily and pleasantly. But this is an entire mistake. The work of Moses in the desert was scarcely a more difficult one than that

of those who had to conduct such a mixed multitude, often in the midst of fears and unbelief, doubts and disputes, out of one state and spirit into another, and a totally different.

I mention these things, because there are persons in Ulster who, perceiving that any like movement in Ulster must meet with great difficulties, are quite alarmed at the idea of grappling with them. Every day I hear the objection urged that the Scotch are wealthier than the Irish. I know that man for man they are; and I believe they are so mainly because, with soil and climate against them, they have been trained by a Church which has called forth their intelligence and their industry. But those who urge the objection, forget that the wealthy, as a whole, did not join the Free Church. The landlords have been gradually seduced by (what is not commonly observed) their education at English schools and universities, to embrace fashionable episcopacy; and the large farmers, lawyers, and merchants were in too many cases afraid to cast in their lot with a people that were so obnoxious to many, and were, in fact, at the time denounced as rebels, because they could not submit in spiritual matters to the decisions of the civil courts. In very many districts the people were, as a whole, of the same grade of society as embraced the gospel in the early ages of the Church. "For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called. But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty, and base things of the world, and things which are despised hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not to bring to mighty things that are." Then, our people in Scotland had to deal with many hard questions of conscience; our peasants and our servant lasses had to determine whether Lord Aberdeen's plausible Bill did or did not cover the spiritual independence of the Church, and were often perplexed and misled. We had in every district to carry on our work in the midst of sore divisions—the servant often going against his master, and the tenant against his landlord, and the wife or sister going one way, and the husband or brother another.

Now, there is no reason why we should have such distractions in Ulster; no reason why we should not march shoulder to shoulder. True, there are not in our Presbyterian community very many wealthy people. But we have a very great number of well-condi-

tioned, *well to do*, honest, industrious people, who owe no man anything, who have stock on their farms and in their shops and ware-rooms, who have brawny arms and stout hearts; and these are the very people, who—rather than the noble and wealthy, generally pre-occupied with keeping up their status—have, in all ages and countries, done most for the spread of the Gospel at home and abroad. I have great faith in the leal-hearted farmers of Ulster, when they are led to see that the time for action has come. Have they not stood bravely by the Presbyterian Church in spite of all sort of landlord and church influence brought to bear against them? Two hundred years they faced and conquered difficulties and dangers, in comparison to which any that may assail us in our day are nothing. It is a curious fact, that the farming class in Scotland were the last to catch the spirit of giving at the Disruption, but when the heather kindled it blazed with a steady flame. Like their Scottish forefathers, the present race of Ulster farmers may not readily be roused; but when roused, we shall see the old *perfervidum ingenium Scotorum*, with the addition of the fire of Ireland, and their march shall be irresistible—like the “march of the Cameron men.” I am not afraid of the ministry being neglected in a Church which has a membership like that of the Presbyterians in Ulster.

I acknowledge that the Scottish Free Church is, as a whole, somewhat wealthier than the Irish Church. But then the Free Church has to maintain upwards of 900 congregations, whereas the Irish Church has not 600. Then the Scottish Church, with its 168 Gaelic congregations, and 50 more congregations with a very small membership, has a greater number of poor congregations than the sister Church in Ireland. And of this I am sure, that the Irish Presbyterian Church is a wealthier body than the United Presbyterian Church in Scotland, which during the past year has raised £103,465 for stipend to its ministers, and £265,561 for all purposes. Of its 597 ministers, considerably upwards of 500 have £150 or more of stipend; only some sixty or seventy have under £150; and vigorous efforts, certain to be crowned with success, are being made to have no minister with less.

I confess that I am apt to entertain a feeling of shame when, on stating this, I find persons coming to me, and saying, “But the Irish are not like you Scotch.” Surely if such a reproach had come from Scotchmen, the Irish would very properly have thrown it back

with indignation. I am vexed that it should be left to me, Scotchman, to answer it. I am sure that if Irishmen fail in the duty at this time, it is because those who ought to encourage and stimulate them are filling them with fears and doubts. And I am still more ashamed of those who, when we show them that the Catholics of Ireland give some £200 or £300 to each of their parish priests, tell us that we cannot do what they do; as if, forsooth, with all the appeals addressed to the understanding, the conscience, and the heart, by the Word of God, and with the grace of God to give life and force to them, we had not a far greater power than can be found in any earthly motives or in any superstition.

But I find that some good ministers still urge, "For years past we have done all we could in the way of stirring up the generosity of the people, and yet we have been unsuccessful. How little has come of our Ministerial Support Fund and our Sustentation Fund!" Now, to all this I reply, first, that there has been a considerable amount of liberality called forth, of late years, in the Presbyterian Church—witness our Foreign Missions, and our Home Missions, and our two Manse Funds. The sum contributed by the Church for all purposes last year was £83,770, or £1 os. 7½d. per family, or 13s. 7½d. per communicant. I am able to prove that the Irish Presbyterian Church is better prepared for giving than the Church of Scotland was a quarter of a century ago. The Ministerial Support Committee has not done so much as could be wished; but it has done something. It has pulled up a great many of our best congregations, and these will gradually pull up the others. In 1854, according to Government Returns, 463 congregations contributed for the support of their ministers £18,699, being an average of only £40 7s. 9½d. to each, and making the whole stipend, including £69 4s. 8d. Royal Bounty, under £110. The Ministerial Support Committee began its operations in 1856, and in 1864 it was able to report that 487 congregations had paid £29,878 to their ministers, or £61 to each; in all, with the *Donum*, £131, or an increase of £20 in a few years. Since that time the energies and the expectations of the Church have been directed towards the increase of the Bounty, which, as every one now sees, has come to nothing (except it be that in trying to patch the old house, they have pulled it down about their ears—I hope that we may get a better), and the increase in voluntary support by the people has been slow; still,

in 1867, the average sum reported as paid to the ministers was £66 9s. 2½d., and this year about £68; and the whole stipend about £138, or an increase of £28 since the movement began. The Sustentation Fund for aiding poor ministers, has not been supported as it ought; still, it raises upwards of £2,000 a-year, and it supplements the incomes of seventy-five ministers. This I acknowledge is only "the day of small things;" but, like the buds and blossoms appearing in early spring, it augurs a day of great things as approaching. We can give a reason for their being so small. The illustrious Bacon, when he held out such confident hopes, in the beginning of the seventeenth century, of an advance in science, was met by the objection that so little had been done in time past. He answered this by shewing that he could give a reason why so little had been accomplished; it was because men had followed a wrong mode of inquiry; and he argued that when they took to the right method, there would be instant and rapid and continual progress: and his ardent anticipations have been more than realized in the strides which physical science has taken since his day. I give a like answer to a like objection drawn from the want of success in raising a large sum in the Presbyterian Church in time past. It was because the people did not feel that they needed to exert themselves; they were satisfied with doing as their fathers had done, and with what the State did for them. But let it be seen clearly that they can no longer do as their grandfathers did, because State support is withdrawn, and I am persuaded they will be roused to think and act in a manner worthy of their ancestors. Then, it is the opinion of some of the best friends of our Church that these repeated attempts to get the Government to increase the Royal Bounty have had a most discouraging effect on the liberality of the people; that it has kept some of our most generous people from giving as they would otherwise have done, because they felt annoyed at the whole proceeding; and it has at the same time kept our selfish people from giving, as they were led to look to other quarters, instead of trusting to their own exertions. I remember a companion of mine at school who had been taught to swim by bladders, and, though he swam pretty well, he was ever afraid to go beyond his depth. But one day an older brother flung him without his bladders into the deep sea, and ever after he braved the waves most courageously. I knew a lady who had long been delicate and unable to walk, till her physician

drove her out one day two miles from her dwelling, took her out from the carriage, and then leaping in himself, left her on the road to find her way home as best she could—which she found herself, with the help of a little anger at the doctor, quite able to do; and in a month after she could walk ten miles. I am by this comparison casting no reproaches on the *Donum*, or any means which may have aided the Presbyterian Church in time past; but when the time comes for these helps being withdrawn, I am not afraid of her. I believe she is prepared to walk and run as other churches have done and are doing.

I am not in the secrets of statesmen, and I am not sure what plan will be followed in the final allocation of the present endowments. I asked a statesman the other day what they now meant to do, and he answered that *they were waiting instructions from the country*. But on one point all are agreed, and it is already embodied in the resolutions of the House of Commons: the personal rights of all who have endowments are to be rigidly preserved; and these in disputed cases are to be interpreted in a liberal spirit. In particular all ministers (I hope also assistant ministers) and professors will have their stipends or salaries continued to them all their lives. I have sometimes thought that the Presbyterian Church might find this not a very unfavorable state of things in which to start a General Sustentation Fund. The church would have to make provision, in the way of making up for the withdrawal of government support, for only about a dozen new ministers every year—for the last seven years the average deaths seem to be under 11 annually. Beginning in this position the Church would, I hope, start at once with a high standard—which I reckon of very great moment—with a minimum stipend of £150 to each minister: to the new ministers, but also to the old by means of supplementing, and in order to place all the present ministers and the new ones on a footing of equality. It would be one advantage of this system, that while it commenced with a high standard it would not be felt at first to be a burden: and as endowed ministers died out, and a larger sum was required, the liberality of the people would be increasing, and would ever be ready to meet our wants. I believe the system is a workable one, and if our statesmen say that the *Donum* shall be paid to the ministers individually all their lives, I believe the Church might accommodate itself to this state of things. But in saying so, I am bound to add, that I see not a few incon-

veniences, more particularly in the circumstance that there would be no want felt immediately and universally in our congregations, and consequently no felt need of instant and general exertion, and in the end the church would have to provide an equivalent to the whole *Donum*, for ever lost. And I think it proper at this place to say, that I entertain no partiality for the plan proposed by some, of making the present age provide a provision for the payment of the stipends in future ages, by insuring the lives of ministers or otherwise. There would be a difficulty in making many of our congregations to fall into such a system, except by a compulsion such as a Church of Christ cannot command; and there would be a risk, amounting almost to a certainty, that congregations would keep down to the low level of the present *Donum*, and that a large Sustentation Fund would be impossible. It appears to me that the true plan is to make our people do their duty—which I believe they will cheerfully—to their church in their own day, and leave posterity to do theirs in their day.

So far as present appearances go, our statesmen, I believe, would prefer paying a given sum to the denominations in lieu of personal rights, and have done for ever with all negotiations with churches in our distracted land—while they leave them to full freedom of action; in other words, would prefer capitalising the revenues. Mr. W. D. Henderson, of the Scottish Amicable Life Assurance Society, calculates that the *Regium Donum* and grants to professors, amounting to £44,000, would, assuming the average age of recipients to be 45, if capitalised at 4 per cent., come to £616,000—that is, to the Presbyterian churches, Subscribing and Non-Subscribing. Let us suppose that the State allotted a capitalised sum of £600,000 to the Assembly for its ministers, not including its professors and the Non-Subscribing Church. The present number of congregations is 560; but it is hoped that they will increase—and provision from the beginning should be made for this—say to 600. The interest of the £600,000 would, let me suppose, be £24,000 or £26,000: this divided among the 600 congregations would give upwards of £43, say £40 or £45 to each for ever. The business of the Church would now be vigorously, and at once by a great effort to which the whole energy of its ministers, elders, and people should be directed, to raise this, by means of a General Sustentation Fund, to an adequate provision for our ministers. And surely we should

never think of aiming at less than £100 for each of our ministers in addition to the £40 or £45 left us by the State. If the Free Church has raised £150 for each of its ministers, and the United Presbyterian Church nearly as much, the Irish Presbyterian Church would be ashamed of any proposal to raise a smaller sum than £100. To secure this would require, in the meanwhile, only £56,000 a year. The number of her members, communicants (122,000) and adult adherents, is about 150,000. Let these give on an average 2d. a week, and we have £65,000, more than the sum required. Some, I am aware, might not be able to give 2d. a week, and more might not be willing; but there would be tens of thousands both able and willing to give more—say, 3d. or 4d. a week, thousands able to give from 6d. to 1s., hundreds 2s. 6d., scores 5s., and dozens 10s., without feeling themselves in the least impoverished. There must be some great want of management, or, more probably, want of faith, if the sum is not realised within a year from the time that the State sets us free to act as we choose.

Some are expecting that, in order to buy off, or procure the good-will, of the Presbyterians, a sum beyond the personal rights of individuals will be granted to the church. This is a subject which requires to be discussed with great delicacy. Care must be taken, in the first place, to secure that the sum thus allowed, which will be a paltry one at the best, does not practically interfere with the generosity of the people. I know that the most far-sighted friends of the Sustentation Fund in Scotland would reckon it a great calamity if the Government, or even a private individual, were to give £100,000 to the Fund. The success of the scheme depends on every member—the ploughman, the weaver, the servant-girl—being made to feel that the success of the whole depends on his or her individual exertions, and that the ship might be lost if a single hole were left unstopped. If the idea gets abroad among the Presbyterian people of Ireland that there is a great *reserve fund* for providing to every minister what might seem to them a high sustenance, I believe it will be vain to attempt to start a General Voluntary Fund. We are in imminent danger of a still greater evil, and we must be on our special guard against it. Every man of common shrewdness sees that if a *bonus* be given to Presbyterians, a like bonus, and this in proportion to their numbers, must be offered to the Catholics. I have made it a matter of duty in these important times to put myself in communication with some of those who have been

reading and guiding the movement for disendowment, and they one and all assure me that, the principle of the equality of all sects being now adopted in Ireland, they must, if any sum is given to one sect, give a like sum to all in proportion to their population. Thus : if there be 6 millions left after paying personal rights to the Established Church, the Presbyterian Church, and to the Catholics for Maynooth, then $4\frac{1}{2}$ millions must go to the Catholics, leaving $1\frac{1}{2}$ for the various Protestant bodies, Episcopalian and others. The Catholics will not accept it for their parish priests, but they may take it for other purposes. They say it belongs to the poor ; and they may claim it for their alms-houses—which will be indefinitely multiplied, for their hospitals, for their university, for their Christian Brothers' and other schools, all taught by the monastic orders, and all under the absolute control of the hierarchy. The effect of this will evidently be to destroy our National System of Education ; and I fear, also, still farther to pauperize our people, instead of making them independent. Presbyterians must be on their guard against being led to play into the hands of those who are plotting all this, but who can succeed in this only by Protestant concurrence—a concurrence which would greatly damage the Protestant churches in the view of their own people and in the view of the world. I am happy to learn that there are intelligent members of the Church of England seriously pondering this subject, and ready to act a noble part, by declaring that, rather than see their church revenues so desecrated, they would prefer to have them secularized, and devoted to the education and social elevation of the people, irrespective of religious denomination. This is the grave question to be settled in the coming year, as the question of endow all or endow none was settled in the past ; and I do trust that Great Britain will determine the second question on the same righteous principles as it has determined the first.

If only we can resist such temptations, and follow the straightforward course, I am not afraid of the issue. There are, indeed, conceivable circumstances in which the attempt to establish a Central Fund would be a failure : and that is in the event of the office-bearers of the Church in town or country failing to enlighten the people ; or seeming to distrust the liberality of their congregations ; or pertinaciously clinging to state pay, when the country has declared that we must have done with it for ever. In such a state of things, our wealthy members would close up their hearts

and button up their pockets; and the common people would feel that the cause was not one for which it was worth while making sacrifices; and in the shipwreck every one would throw the blame on his neighbour, the ministers on the people, and the people on their ministers. The town congregations might not care, but it would be a day of fearful calamity to the country brethren. May God preserve us from such a lamentable issue!

“But then,” says a Christian minister to me, “you had much enthusiasm to carry you on in the Free Church, on the part of the ladies and gentlemen, young men and maidens.” I acknowledge that we had; but why should there not be the same in Ireland? Are the Scotch alone, of all people on the earth, susceptible of enthusiasm? Are the Irish incapable of it? This certainly is not the common theory of the Irish character, and is not one which I am inclined to adopt. I am ready to testify, after a sixteen years residence among them, that they are susceptible of every generous impulse. “But how,” asks my brother, “are we to raise this enthusiasm?” I say to him, “seek first to catch it thyself.” And if he asks, “how may I get it,” I say “from the altar of God in heaven; and let it burn on thy heart as an altar; and incense may be kindled from it to be diffused among thy people; and as like fires are kindled in others, and other incense inflamed, you will find the service in which you engage pleasant to yourself and others, and accepted of God in Christ the Beloved.”

One thing is certain, we must face the crisis whether we will or no. And so we must beware of encouraging fears which are apt to propagate themselves in others; we must repress faintness of heart, which, in the day of battle, is very infectious and terribly depressing. In reading history, I have often been struck with amazement to find how comparatively few were the persons who took an active part in the great struggles of which all succeeding ages have been proud. It was so in the Great Reformation in the sixteenth century; in the great Covenanting Struggle in Scotland; in the great Puritan Movement in England; in the Disruption Exodus in Scotland. The great body of the people stuck by their farms and their shops, leaving the nobler men of the country to fight for them. We may expect it to be the same in this epoch, reckoned by the *Times* newspaper, no bad judge of the characteristics of the age, as the most important since the Reformation, and not too highly estimated by a great statesman, “a

time this which, so far as I can measure, is by far the gravest which we have seen for a quarter of a century." Worldly wisdom, looking so sagacious and far-sighted, will be seen to be dribbling folly; and our miserable earthlings, waiting till they have sight, will realize none of those rewards which are reaped by those who have faith in a good cause. But there will be heroic men raised up to lead on the contest, and there will be timid women waxing valiant in the fight, and turning to flight the armies of the aliens. In the heart of this battle terror, even caution, may be a crime; and boldness, decision, and courage the highest prudence. As the vessel is shaken, it is to be hoped that the cream will rise to the top, that is, the unselfishness, the piety, the liberality; and that the scum and mire, that is, the earthliness and carnality, will sink to the bottom. The order is now given by our Great Captain, "Grenadiers to the front;" and the grenadiers in His army are not your men of worldly wisdom, your men who fight with carnal weapons, but our liberal givers, our Sabbath-school teachers, our praying men and women—these are the true children of Israel, and have power with God and prevail.

This is a question lying in a heavenly sphere, far above the cloudy and troubled region of party politics. There will be plausible cries raised to gain the ignorant. There will be the cry of "Protestantism in danger" raised by knowing men, prepared to condemn popery to save certain class interests of their own. But if there be politicians ready to sacrifice the higher interests of religion to gain their party ends, then we have only one resource—the Presbyterian Church must just sacrifice them; and they may find a few years hence—as others are doing at this present time—that they have lost more than their church has done by their defalcation. The time has come for testing the professed friends, and knowing who are the true friends, of our church; who they are that flatter to gain selfish and party objects, and have made it a political tool for the accomplishment of their own purposes; and who they are that love it for what is good in it, for what is spiritual, and who favour it as promoting the high ends which a genuine Church of Christ can accomplish in our land and throughout the world.

But you may now be asking what steps do I recommend? But before answering this question, I have to answer another, what steps do I not recommend?

1. I do not think that this is the time for discussing eagerly

and keenly the establishment and voluntary controversy. Those of us Irish Presbyterians who hold the abstract principle of establishments, cannot approve of any existing National Church, Romanist, Anglican, or Scottish. We do, indeed, maintain that it is quite lawful for a State, in *certain circumstances*, to give money to the Church, and for the Church to receive it; but we are convinced that *the certain circumstances* in which it is expedient, or even lawful to do this, or concur in this, are becoming fewer every year; now that statesmen avow that they can rule a country only on the condition of making all denominations alike, so that in a divided nation we can have any one sect endowed only on the condition of endowing all—which we believe to be wrong. I can conceive an enlightened friend of the establishment principle almost wishing that all existing establishments should be swept away, that at some future time men may be in a position to establish a National Church, disencumbered of all the abuses that have gathered around them in mediæval times, in Great Britain and on the Continent of Europe. And surely our voluntary friends will feel that the present duty devolving on them, is to show what voluntary liberality can do in sustaining the Church of Christ in decent dignity and independence, now that it is about to be thrown upon its own resources. The majority of the representatives of the nation are proposing to disestablish all sects in Ireland, not on the voluntary principle, but on the ground that in so divided and distracted a community it is not expedient, in fact not for the interests of religion, to select one sect as the recipient of State favour, and place the others in a position of felt inferiority. It has been in fact after this manner that the Churches have ceased to be established in the United States and in our wide British Colonies; and, providentially, in all cases they have been ready to meet the emergency, and would not return if they could to their former condition. With such histories as we have before us, to instruct us as to the way in which the tide of events is running, it is altogether out of place and out of time to be fighting old battles; to be stirring the embers of fires that have died out; to be indulging in reflections and reproaches; and bringing charges of inconsistency and dishonesty, when our aim should be to combine for the accomplishment of a work, which the Head of the Church is devolving upon us, the greatest, I apprehend, which has been laid on the Church for ages,

(2.) I do not think that it is expedient for the Presbyterian Church to be seen engaged in a mean scramble to secure as much as possible of the spoil of the Established Church. Every one allows that our churches, our manses, our schools, and our glebes, as they were not given by the State, so they cannot be seized by the State. Every one declares that all the personal rights of our ministers and professors are to be allowed to them for their lives, or to their church for perpetuity, and that these rights are to be interpreted in the most liberal spirit. There is no use in persons making a fight for this, and claiming credit for gaining it : for it is freely conceded without a contest. I am honestly of opinion that it is not by any seemingly selfish grasping at gain that we are likely to obtain a larger allowance from the high-minded statesmen of England. The Catholics have, I know, gained considerable approbation in Great Britain by their plainly declaring, from the beginning and throughout, that they are seeking nothing for themselves in this contest. *Let us keep them to their word*, and not give them a reason or pretext from departing from it by any procedure of ours. It may be all proper in our General Assembly to appoint a large and impartial committee of its members to watch over the public interests of the church in this emergency ; but let that committee beware of degrading our Church, in its own eyes and the eyes of the community at large, by unseemly contests about money ; of playing into the hands of a far-sighted and wily enemy, which would allow us half a million if it got eight times as much ; and of doing anything to turn aside the energy of the Church from the great work, to which it is now called, of calling forth the warm sympathies of the Christian people. Even on the supposition that in the scramble it could get ten or twenty pounds a-year more for each of our ministers, what could this avail if, in the meanwhile, we were thereby digging a channel to draw off the living stream of Christian liberality, and losing the chance of establishing a large central fountain, as a constant and never-failing supply for our ministers and the ordinances of religion.

The red hand, placed on our public buildings as an emblem of our Province, has a lesson for us at this time. The fact or fable tells how the broad acres of Shane's Castle and the Kingdom of Ulster came into the possession of O'Neill. That eager man was all but losing the prize, and gained it only by cutting off his right hand and casting it on the shore, which became his in consequence

The Presbyterian Church is in like manner sorely beset in the waters at this time; but I verily believe if she have but courage on her part, with what some value as if it were their right hand, she might gain possession of a territory in comparison of which the richest earthly inheritance is of little value, gain possession of Ulster and place it under Christ as King.

3. I rather think that the time has scarcely yet come for actually instituting a General Sustentation Fund. The minds of our people are, I believe, not yet prepared for this. And, then, the Church, before she can establish a system likely to be permanent, must know a little more about what our statesmen mean to do for us and for us. But, meanwhile, let us keep steadily before us the fixed idea that the work of reconstruction must be undertaken by us; that we must be seeking after information on all hands; that we should be welcoming such generous gifts as a distinguished nobleman in our neighbourhood has been proffering to us—the first gift offered to us, and a token that others will follow from men following the example; and that we must be ready to launch a well-concocted Sustentation Fund, the moment the time for action comes.

But, on the other hand, this is a time for action—for prompt for immediate, for present action.

I. *It is a time in which Christians should be much in prayer.* This is our first and our last duty, one in comparison of which every other sinks into insignificance. We have primarily to pray for ourselves that we may be guided aright; that we may be preserved from selfishness, from party spirit ecclesiastical or political, from prejudice personal or hereditary, and from adhering against our convictions to a false consistency; that we may be swayed by love to Christ, and love to souls; and that we may see the path of duty clearly defined before us. Then we must pray for our ministers, and elders, and church courts, that they may be led to act in the Spirit of Christ, and with a single desire to promote the good of the country and the Church. We must thus, as individual Christians, daily besiege the throne of grace, and give God no rest till he make Jerusalem a praise on the earth. Not only so, there should be frequent meetings for prayer among a God's praying people; in particular, on the part of our ministers and elders and Sabbath-school teachers, and of all who feel an interest in the spreading and purity of Christ's kingdom.

II. *There should be conferences in our sessions and committees, in towns and districts where people of like mind and spirit can be conveniently brought together.* Care must of course be taken that in these meetings political differences be not allowed to appear, and that harsh language and disparaging reflections of every kind be avoided. When Christians, jealous for the honor of their Church, can meet in the unity of the Spirit, great good may arise from conferring freely together on the present state and coming prospects of the Church.

III. *There seems to be a special propriety in the laity coming forward at this time and giving a public expression of their sentiments.* The time has come for them to say that they will stand by their Church in its difficulties, and that they will support practically, when the time comes, a well-devised scheme for the sustenance of the ministry in the poorer districts of our country. This is a duty specially devolving on our wealthier congregations. It may likewise be the duty of the members to utter a solemn protest against the promiscuous endowment of truth and error, whether out of new funds or old church funds; and to declare that they will not concur in the election of any member of parliament, whether Conservative or Liberal, who will not commit himself against every measure tending in this direction.

IV. *Pains must be taken to keep our congregations informed as to what is going on.* Next to prayer this is the most important duty lying on us; and it specially devolves on ministers, elders, and others, who themselves appreciate the importance of the time in which our lot has been cast. I do not intend in this address to lessen the difficulties, the perplexities of our position; on the contrary, it is because I am so impressed with these that I am anxious that the Church should awake to a sense of the awful significance of our situation. I do fear that in certain quarters our people be left in ignorance of what is happening, and that they be not in the least prepared for action when the time for action cannot be put off any longer. Some, I know, imagine that they may stick to the State Endowments pertinaciously and to the last, and teach the people to do so; and when that resource fails turn to the congregations and say, we are now to trust in you. But there are men esteemed wise in the Church and in the world, who are otherwise, and will be seen in the end to be fools. There is believed to be such a thing in the world as falling between two stools. We may

stick to the old vessel so long, that the life-boat which has come to our aid may weary waiting for us, and move off leaving us to sink in the waters. When there has been so marked a preference given to a more showy wooer, the people, when we are driven to address them and court them, may tell us "you have come to us only when you have been refused by another." Is there not a reason that a people thus trained may turn out as shrewd as those who have been trying to educate them? They may say "you taught us to think that we were so poor and niggardly that we could not, and would not support you, and we believed you; and we are now acting on our belief and yours, and shew practically that you were right." In the name of prudence, not to speak of reason and principle, there must be an end for ever of all that talk which has in years past been rung in the ears of our statesmen, and in the community, about our people being so poor that they cannot give to the cause of Christ; whereas every one knows that they are not so poor as to be unable to give to the cause of intemperance, and that they have only to expend one-tenth of what they lavish in the single article of ardent spirits, to provide amply for their ministers at home, and decently for the missionaries in foreign parts. Our deputations must now be not so much to statesmen, as to our Christian congregations, to rouse them from their lethargy and instruct them in their duty.

For this purpose we must turn to the law and to the testimony. We must bring clearly and forcibly before our people what the New Testament says as to the obligations under which they lie to support the ministrations of the gospel. We must call their attention to the grand principle laid down by our Lord in sending out the seventy disciples to teach and to preach, Luke x. 7—"The laborer is worthy of his hire." We must ring in their ears the appeals of the Apostles as they addressed the churches planted by them, Gal. vi. 6—"Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teaches in all good things." Such passages as 1 Cor. ix. 7—14 must be carefully expounded—"Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges, or who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? or who feedeth a flock and eateth not of the milk of the flock?" . . . "We have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things." . . . Do you not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers

with the altar? Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel."

I hear men saying every day "the time for action has not yet come; when it does come we are prepared to act a noble part; but the crisis has not yet arrived." I tell such that in an important sense the crisis has already come. "Oh, ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky, but can ye not discern the signs of the times?" Verily, if there were such signs in the sky, the farmer would begin to look after his crops. If a commercial crisis were as imminent, our mercantile men would look sharply after their goods and the purchasers. I do not say that it is time to take the final step, but it is time for us to make preparatiou. We may not just be required to commence building the new house; but there can be nothing wrong in looking out for a site, and inquiring how and where we are to get materials. We must accustom the minds of our people habitually to contemplate the new state of things, and estimate the greatness of the emergency. There *is* a risk that the event arrives and finds us altogether unprepared to meet it, by our people being left uninstructed. It is certainly possible that the crisis may come and go, and our people continue satisfied with their present low state of giving, and our ministers be left as inadequately supported as ever. Prior to the crisis in Scotland, to which I have so often referred, there was a preparation for it: for years in the discussion of great public principles, and for months on deputations visiting every district and almost every congregation. It is only by such a preparation that our people can be made ready to meet the occasion, and to float on the tide that has risen, instead of being left high and dry on the beach from which the waters have receded.

I have hopes of much incidental good likely to arise from this crisis, if only we have faith and act a faithful part. The event in Providence will call forth a spirit of zeal and liberality in the Irish Episcopal Churches and the Irish Presbyterian Churches such as they have never exhibited before. I speak of the Irish Episcopal Church, because I have an excessive longing to see a church, embracing a large body of the upper classes, working a General sustentation Fund, and using its ample resources, and putting forth its full energies, for the voluntary support of its clergy. I have an idea that such a Church will exhibit some noble features which cannot be expected in the poorer and more struggling Churches;

more especially in the way of encouraging a higher refinement of mind, and tone, and manners in the ministers of religion, such as are supposed to be found only in established Churches; and not in those while it has all the zeal of nonconformist communities. We are forever taunted with the *vulgarity of Dissenters*, but the persons who reproach us, forget that this vulgarity, real or supposed, has arisen not from their being non-established, but simply because the highest offices in our universities and upper schools have been studiously denied them; and because the upper classes have abandoned them, as being taught that they would thereby promote the cause of social order—and not being sufficiently shrewd to perceive that a Church promotes social order not because it is endowed, but because it is a Church of the Lord Jesus Christ, and of the New Testament which contains His laws and His precepts. I have an idea that a Free Church, containing within it only the educated and our refined classes, may tend to raise all our Churches to a higher social status, possibly even to a higher level of liberality.

I cherish a higher hope. I have an expectation that, as the barriers which at present separate them being broken down, the Churches of Christ in our land will be brought to a better understanding; and Protestantism will exhibit before our Roman Catholic population a visible unity such as she has not been able hitherto to display. I believe, indeed, that “Presbyterianism is founded on the Word of God, and is agreeable thereto:” but I believe at the same time in the “Holy Catholic Church and in the communion of saints.” I do trust that the time is at hand when Presbyterians will feel themselves at liberty to join more freely in prayer and in many works of usefulness with that active “people” who have planted so magnificent a college in the midst of us, and called so catholic-minded a man as the Rev. William Arthur to be its President. I entertain, what may seem to some, a most unlikely idea. I have never cherished any feeling of antipathy to the Established Episcopal Church of this country: though at times provoked, I have never uttered a bitter word against her. With a little rationalism, little ritualism, and much evangelistic zeal on the part on many of her ministers—with all her faults, she is certainly one of the best Established Churches in the world. I believe that some of her faults, in particular her haughty treatment of Presbyterianism, which has been so irritating, have arisen from

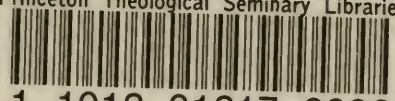
position, and will disappear when her position is changed. I believe that Presbyterians are required to overlook the wrongs, real or supposed, of the past; for it is clear that the circumstances of the future will no longer admit of a repetition of them. I do cling to the hope that in a very few years hence you will see Episcopalians and Presbyterians, at present standing at a distance from each other, meeting for prayer and for conference, and for the spread of the free Gospel of Jesus Christ, north and east, and south and west, in Ireland. The banns of marriage between the Churches were proclaimed many years ago at Hillsborough, by our now veteran Presbyterian general—of whom we are all so fond, and of whom we are all so proud: but the parties quarreled about the contract, and the marriage did not take place. Last year, the banns were proclaimed a second time, at the same place; but the parties' quarrels intervened, and the marriage has not yet been consummated. But that "old man eloquent" is "a prophet of our own," notwithstanding; and his words will yet come to pass—may he be spared to see it, and he will rejoice in it, though it has not just come about in the way he expected—when the banns will be proclaimed a third time; and with the parties brought to a footing of equality, and their jealousies and misunderstandings all removed, they will be joined in a hearty and a holy marriage union, which no man can put asunder.

I look for still more important and still more pleasing results. I believe that a short time ago the Irish Presbyterian Church ran some little risk of falling out of fellowship with all nonconformist Churches, without getting into closer communion with any endowed Church. The prospect has suddenly brightened. Surely we will soon be brought into closest fellowship with all the free Presbyterian Churches in the world. First, I hope that we will be brought into communion with our scattered Presbyterian Churches, Covenanting and Seceding, in Ireland. The bodies referred to are, I am aware, small in the number of their membership; but if we weigh, instead of numbering them, and cast into the scale their stedfastness to principle, and the sacrifices they have made, it will be found that they bring vast moral power with them. I reckon myself as of no mean descent, as being sprung from men who fought at Drumclog and Bothwell Brig, and were hunted like deer upon the mountains of Scotland—which always look to me as if they had been dyed to their lovely crimson hue by the blood of the martyrs who

fought and bled upon them; and it will be a proud day to me, and I believe for Ulster, when the men who fled for a time with the flag of the covenant into the wilderness will come out from their fastnesses with that blue flag floating over them and untarnished. Then, every obstacle being removed, we will feel ourselves members of a large family; and find ourselves in loving friendship with every Free Presbyterian Church in the world, in Scotland, in England, on the Continent of Europe, in distant Canada, in the United States, and in Australia. The great event in the history of the Presbyterian Church in our day was that Convention held in Philadelphia last autumn, which brought six thousand Presbyterian congregations to a visible unity in the United States. The next great event in the history of the Presbyterian Church will be the meeting of all the Free Presbyterian Churches in Great Britain, with the Irish sister sitting among them, and holding out her hands to the best ministers of the Established Church of Scotland, and saying to them, "come with us and we will do thee good."

In these eventful times we are engaged in a greater work than that of reading history—we are making history. I do confess that I should like to see our Church taking a position and acting a part which will make her stand high in the view of the churches of Christ throughout the world; nay, which will call forth the admiration of the world itself. All eyes are at present directed towards her, and I know that in every land in which are Christian communities, there are persons praying for her and trusting that she may rise to the greatness of the emergency. I do hope that when some future Dr. Reid or Dr. Killen writes the history of these critical years, 1868, 1869, and 1870, we will give them ground to record, in the chapter devoted to the period, that we acted a noble and disinterested part, worthy of our ancestors and of our Church's history, and so that our children may say to their children, and their children to the generation following, "go and do likewise."

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