

SUSTENTATION FUND OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF CANADA.

The following deliverance on the subject of the Sustentation Scheme, was adopted by the Synod at the meeting in Toronto, June 24th, 1848. (See Minutes, p. 25.)

First.—That for the removal of misapprehensions that still prevail, it is declared that no system of regulation respecting the mode in which the funds of congregations for the sustentation of the ministry or any other object shall be raised, has ever been enjoined by the Synod, and that congregations are at full liberty to adopt such arrangements for such purposes, not at variance with the recognised principles and practices of our Church as they may deem best.

Second.—That the scheme of distribution at present acted upon be continued, but that it be referred to the Sustentation Board, to determine after due consideration, and especially after careful observation of the practical working of the scheme during the ensuing year, whether the provision which limits the deduction made from the contributions of congregations to 20 per cent. might not be advantageously removed.

Third.—That the Synod pledges itself to work the scheme as the scheme of the whole Church, and in order that every congregation may be induced to place itself immediately on the scheme, and that effectual provision may be made for steady and permanent operations, resolves to appoint an agent who shall devote himself to this work under the direction of the Sustentation Board, and whose salary the Synod agrees to guarantee from the Synod Fund, until five sixths of the congregations of the Synod have placed themselves on the scheme, by the payment of their first contribution, after which, his salary shall be charged on the Sustentation Fund—and recommend to Presbyteries that in time to come no settlement of Ministers be made within their bounds, till all due means have been used to induce the congregations to place themselves upon the Sustentation scheme."

"The Synod being unanimous in regarding Mr. John Burns, as being eminently qualified to act as Agent for the sustentation scheme, agreed to recommend to the Sustentation Board to endeavour to obtain his services in that capacity, and in the event of their failing in this, to appoint any other person as Agent whom they may judge to be qualified for the office."

The Sustentation Board, as at present constituted, adds to its number John Burns, Esq., Streetsville.

The Board having been convened by circular to meet on the 12th July, had laid before them the above resolution of Synod.

The Board, after full consideration, cordially concur in the resolution and recommendation as above, and, in order to carry it and other measures into full and immediate effect, resolve:—

1. That an appeal shall be made to all those congregations not on the fund, with the view of their being induced, without delay, to connect themselves with the Board; and, for this purpose, they appointed Dr. Burns, Mr. Gale, and Alexander McCluslan, Esq., as a sub-Committee, to draw up a circular to ministers, congregations, and all having interest; such circular being submitted to the Board before being issued.

2. That in the case of those congregations at present on the fund, or which may be put upon it by the Synod, who may not be able to realize the minimum fixed, a correspondence shall be opened with the members of the Home Mission Committee, with the view of obtaining from their fund such aid as may be necessary to effect this desirable object.

3. That John Burns, Esq., of Streetsville, recommended by the Synod as Agent, shall be cordially hailed in that character by the members of the Board, and application made to him forthwith by a deputation from the Board.

4. That Presbyteries shall be urged without delay, by circular or otherwise, to give every aid to

the Agent or Agents of the Board, in communicating with congregations within their bounds, in order to obtain their concurrence in the scheme, and the resolute adoption of its measures.

Dr. Burns and Mr. McCluslan were named as a deputation to wait on Mr. Burns, and solicit his consent to the proposal regarding the agency.

The Board being again convened by circular on the 10th August, 1848,—Present in the chair, C. C. Ferris, Esq., the Rev. Messrs. Robb and Gale, Messrs. McLaren, Davidson, Cook, Burns, McLellan, and the Secretary.

The sub-Committee appointed on the 12th July, to wait upon Mr. John Burns, gave in their report. Mr. Burns being now present, consented to become the Agent of the Board, and promised to enter upon the duties of that office with as little delay as possible.

The sub-Committee also presented the following address, which was approved of, and ordered to be published:—

ADDRESS OF THE SUB-COMMITTEE.

Having been appointed as a Sub-Committee of the Sustentation Board to draw up an address to congregations on the subject of ministerial support, and on the special claims of the sustentation scheme of our church, we would, in the outset, seek to impress all parties concerned with a sense of the vast importance of the matter now submitted to them. Any man who is seriously attached to the word of God, and its holy truths and ordinances, cannot look around him with ordinary observation, and have his eyes shut to the fact that scepticism and infidelity are on the increase, and that the question of the existence of a regular standing ministry in the land is, or will soon be, a leading question of the day. Many influences, both of a religious and political kind, are at work to throw into the background the claims of the ministry as an ordinance of God. There are even men of piety, but of mistaken or perverted views, who seem willing to sacrifice the whole concern of man's salvation, and of Christianity, as a divine institute for saving men, to accidental circumstances, or to optional movement. There is something plausible and captivating in the favorite maxim—"they that wish for ministers may help themselves;" but we apprehend that a lurking and sneering infidelity is at the bottom of it, and that in import it amounts nearly to a maxim of the same school—"let every man find his way to heaven as he best can." Both are based on the assumption that there is nothing fixed or determined in the truths of religion at all; and that God hath given us nothing certain or safe as a guide in the way to himself. Assuredly, we are, that no maxims are more agreeable to an infidel's taste, and that nothing gratifies more the enemy of the glorious gospel than the absolute and complete prostration of the Christian ministry.—The reason is plain. Churches regularly organised, and an order of men set apart for the defence and propagation of religious truth, have, in all ages, proved the strongest bulwark against error. The most cunning and, perhaps, the most successful assaults on revelation have been ever made through the church and its appointed guardians; and this consideration, while it should lead us to seek the elevation of ministerial attainment and character, ought also to suggest the necessity of suitable encouragement being given to young men of piety and talent to study for the church. We may depend upon it, as the result of uniform experience, that a low scale of remuneration for the service of the sanctuary, and uncertainty or irregularity in payments, are sure to produce a feeble and inefficient ministry. So long as the estimate formed of the real value of ministerial labour is so far below that formed of all kinds of secular toil; and so long as the rise in the approved value of other kinds of remunerative labour has advanced, during the last thirty years, at a rate so far beyond that at which ministerial services in the house of God have advanced in public estimate, we need not

wonder at the growing difficulty in obtaining pastors for vacant congregations, or an adequate supply of talented and pious aspirants for the ministerial office.

In point of fact, we are not aware of one Protestant unendowed church in Christendom that is not at this very moment complaining of difficulty in these departments; and assuredly, with the rapid progress of public opinion as adverse to civil endowments for sacred ends, the difficulty is one of very serious magnitude. We speak not of the probable issues in regard to commanding literature,—though there never was a time, certainly, in the history of the church, when high attainments in learning were so indispensable in the Christian ministry, as at present—but we now speak merely of such a portion of intellectual acquisition as may raise the church above absolute contempt. Vain is it to plead that ardent piety in students and pastors will manifest itself irrespectively of all secular considerations. It may do so in some instances; but, as a general rule, we would say that it is a very poor encouragement to piety in ministers to be told, that while real worth in every other department may expect valuable encouragement, even as to this world, its inseparable accompaniments in the walks of the church must henceforth be subject poverty and depression. Moreover, stunted circumstances are themselves a blight even on piety; and the very worst thing a people could wish for their pastor, even as to his efficiency among them, would be, an ever vexing and ceaseless anxiety about provision for himself and his family.

But, without enlarging on these views, it is manifest that in this country, and in the present day, it rests, in a great measure, with the Christian people to determine whether the influences of the gospel shall keep pace with the growth of the population, and whether an efficient gospel ministry shall be raised up and sustained in this land. A more solemn and vitally important question cannot be propounded, whether we regard the temporal welfare of our community, or the interests of immortal souls, or the glory of the Saviour; neither can it occur in circumstances more affecting and critical than those in which we are placed in this young, and rapidly advancing, and hitherto spiritually destitute community, whose future moral aspect and destiny must be deeply influenced by the conduct of the church at this stage of its progress. May the Lord, the Spirit, lay it on the hearts and consciences of all professing Christians.

It is further manifest, both from the magnitude of the interests at stake, and from the painfully unfavorable results of experience in time past, that the support of the gospel ministry ought not to be regarded as an unimportant or secondary concern in the administration of the church of Christ—that it ought not to be left to the disjointed, and irregular, and unskillful efforts of individual congregations—but must be taken up and dealt with as the concern of the whole church, in its collective wisdom and energy, and as involving a great ordinance of her Divine head.

Impressed with the views which we have endeavoured thus to set forth, the Synod of the Presbyterian Church of Canada resolved, at their meeting in October, 1844, to organise a scheme for the more effectual sustentation of the Ministry. The leading feature of the scheme was the principle that the support of the ministry throughout the land, is the concern of the whole church, and of each congregation in it—the principle of mutual support—the wealthier congregations contributing in aid of the weaker—and all working together on a well-compact scheme of financial union. It was plain from the first, that the success of the plan depended entirely on a very general concurrence of all the congregations throughout the Province; and with a view of securing this, a plan of co-operation was drawn up with great labour by a Committee of Synod, and approved of by the Commission thereafter. It appeared, however, that objections of various kinds were operating against the scheme; and to the best pains of removing those, the attention of successive Synods has been