

is supported in America, have imbibed their notions, and are seeking to level the religious establishments existing there, that the full blessedness of American institutions and principles may be introduced among them! Should they ever succeed in their insane project, it may safely be predicted, that they, or their posterity, will find the lessons of experience very bitter. The preceding statement clearly shews how injurious it must prove to leave the religious instruction of a country exclusively to the precarious donations of private liberality;—observe we say *exclusively*, for it is perhaps impossible to provide by legal endowment *entirely* for the spiritual wants of a whole community; and it would not be desirable, if were possible, to remove those objects on which private liberality may be suitably expended, and for which it may be competent. But by casting religion on private liberality alone for maintenance, it is exposed to all the fluctuations of commerce and manufacture; in times of pecuniary embarrassment its resources are dried up; and services which ought never to know any remission must be retarded or wholly discontinued. Ministers in these circumstances will always be eminently the sufferers. The burden will fall directly, and without any mitigation upon them. For in a country, like the United States, the most liberal classes, are probably the merchants in the great cities; but is it to be thought, that such persons will continue their liberality in seasons of commercial distress, such as those under the pressure of which they at present suffer? Nay, will not all classes very naturally conclude that the voluntary donation for the support of religion is a thing that may very properly stand over until they can better afford it, that is, until the sum can

be spared without any diminution of their own conveniences? Individuals of such very decided Christian principle may be found, who will continue to give even when giving is a sacrifice; but experience has always proved that the majority will act differently; and hence in every season of embarrassment, ministers depending on the voluntary principle, will be the first to feel their resources fail. And if it should happen that the support given to ministers, even in the most prosperous times and when fully paid, is barely sufficient, it is obvious, that in times of great mercantile stagnation, such as the present, they will soon be plunged into absolute penury and want. Were they only sharers in the general distress, and in the common degree, they would not be objects of any particular commiseration. But it is worse with them than this. All other classes of men may accumulate, and in this country they generally do so. Ministers, however, have not the power—they have little share in the general prosperity of their people—and when adversity comes, it affects them, not merely with a diminution of customary gains, but with an abstraction of the very means of subsistence. This is more than a hardship—it is a positive injustice; and so long as it is permitted to continue in the church, it will wither her strength and retard her progress. But it is a vice essentially inherent in the voluntary system according to the form in which it is usually set out by its narrow-minded advocates. For, supposing that the principles of a people were stable enough to afford any good basis for the system, the means at their disposal are not, on every emergence, adequate to the end. “Viewing it in this light, we entertain little doubt, that as the general course of civilization is to sys