

OUR CONTRIBUTORS.

THE SUSTENTATION FUND.

The Presbyterian Church in Canada, we take for granted, desires to institute a Fund which will secure an adequate stipend for her ministry, and enable her to supply the Gospel throughout the land, as far as her duty extends. To do this great work, she ought not to be satisfied with any kind of plan that may be suggested, much less with an inferior method of accomplishing it, but should rise to the importance of her mission, and adopt such a plan as would consolidate the Church, and give her a firmer foothold among the people—develop the spiritual life of her congregations, and elevate the position of her ministry. Such a plan the Sustentation Fund provides, of which the ablest financiers of the present day, among whom might be mentioned the present Prime Minister of Great Britain, have spoken in terms of the highest admiration. The Scheme of Mr. King is the simple device which one has resort to when appealed to for help in some pressing case of charity. It is an appeal to the Church, righteous enough in itself, to give a little to help some of the poorer congregations. There is this simplicity in it, which recommends it to those who do not wish to be troubled; but it is not a Scheme worthy of being adopted by our Church. In fact, it is no improvement at all upon our present state of things. Now, Mr. King has written three (at least) long letters to expound his Scheme. Allow me to expound, as shortly as I can, one—in fact the distinctive feature in the Sustentation Fund. The first regulation in regard to the Fund, under the second head, requires "all self-sustaining and aid-giving congregations to participate in the Fund, sending in the amount of the minimum stipend, or the minister's receipt for the same, plus what they can give in addition, and receiving back the minimum stipend for their minister." Now, this regulation seems to be a stumbling-block to many. People ask, what does it mean? What is the use of it? They send in and get back the same amount. Now, there are abundant good reasons for this, and a little consideration will convince any unprejudiced person of these. First, the Church wants all congregations to have part in this Fund. And surely it is not much to ask of a congregation, in order to put itself on the same footing as the other congregations, in order to be in line with the rest of the Church, to comply with this request. But second, the Church desires all the congregations to send in their amount in order to create a Fund such as she requires for the work, and it is surely not asking much to ask the use of the equal dividend for a few months. And third, the sending in of this contribution unites the congregation with every other in the Church, in the same important work of supplying the Gospel—the mere amount not changing the principle. The Church wants all to be in this mission; all to be in it on the same footing; all to be bound together in it.

But again, take the case of those congregations which are aid-giving. It is asked, why send in both the equal dividend, say \$750, and the surplus which such congregation offers to the Fund above that, say \$500? Obviously for the reasons above stated, as well as others. Such a congregation is an example both to those below it and to those above it. It has done the whole Church a service; it has done itself a service; it has put itself in the ranks among the feeblest, and it has encouraged them by this pledge of its sympathy, as well as by this contribution to the Fund. And it has done all this at the very small trouble of sending forward and receiving back its equal dividend. Such is a brief explanation of this clause in reference to these two classes. In reference to the aid-receiving, the course asked of them is obvious. The Church says to them: "Give us all you can for this great work, and we will give you back a portion equal to that of every other brother in the Church." "We recognise you have done your best, and the Church decrees an adequate portion to all her pastors." Now, having thus received in and paid out the equal dividend among all the congregations on the platform, let us ask, before taking up any other detail, what has the Church done? Has she merely distributed a charitable dole to her poorer pastors? Has she merely met her great want by a "hand-to-mouth" device? Has she merely stereotyped the undesirable condition of things at present

obtaining in her congregations? No, she has lifted up the whole Church. Every congregation has been made to feel the impulse and the influence of a common sympathy with the whole Church. The whole Church, in its ministry, stands shoulder to shoulder on the same just and equal platform. A new era, and a brighter one for the Church and her pastors, has been inaugurated. The broad shield of the Church has been thrown over all her congregations; a common bond of union has been constituted, and an ample salary secured for all her pastors. A Scheme that has commended itself to Presbyterian Churches throughout the world; a Scheme, broad, generous, and statesmanlike, has conferred on the Church a new power and influence in the country, and a unanimous voice of thanksgiving expresses gratitude that so wise and sufficient a solution of the great problem has been adopted, and that the Supplemental Fund has been given a final and respectful quietus.

I have thus very briefly pointed out an explanation of what seemed a difficulty to many, but what now can seem no difficulty, and with your permission I would, in another communication, go further into a consideration of the details of the Scheme.

D. D. MCLEOD.

MR. EDITOR,—I heartily concur in the views expressed in the above letter, and would like, with your permission, to make a few additional remarks on the same point. It will be noticed that the Sustentation Committee, in order to meet objections urged against this part of the plan, have agreed to accept the minister's receipt instead of the actual remittance of the money. Personally, I did not approve of this compromise, and in the other Churches working this plan, the money is transmitted regularly and returned to the minister on the quarter day. Even the receipt is better than nothing, and would stimulate dilatory treasurers, but the actual paying in of the money would be the most certain means of securing to all the brethren the punctual payment of what, in most cases, would form the larger proportion of their salary. I am told by business men that there would be no practical difficulty in carrying out this part of the plan, as post-offices and banks are now found everywhere throughout the Dominion. Again, with regard to aid-receiving congregations, Mr. King has endeavoured to prejudice such congregations against the Sustentation Fund by pointing out the hardship of compelling them to send their whole income into the Fund, and so preventing them enjoying the privilege of paying their minister directly all they are able to raise towards his stipend. Practically, I do not believe this difficulty would ever be raised, for surely any congregation only able to raise \$500 would have no objections to sending that sum into the Fund, to receive back \$750 for their beloved minister; and surely sensible Christian people would be glad to know that in sending in their money to the Central Fund they were receiving in return the sympathy and support of the Church at large. Both Mr. King and Dr. Caven laid down the principle that the duty of supporting the minister rests entirely with the congregation calling him, and the latter illustrated his view by referring to the difference between the Methodist and the Presbyterian Church. "In the Methodist Church," he said, "the minister is the servant of the whole Church; in the Presbyterian Church the minister is first the servant of the congregation calling him." Now, I admit at once if the above is the theory of our Church as to the relationship existing between pastor and people, a Sustentation Fund is not only impracticable, but improper, as it proposes to come in between the servant and his master as paymaster, an interference which no master would tolerate. I understand that I am first the servant of Christ, and second the servant of the Church, and I have vowed obedience to the authorities of the Church, but I did not promise obedience to the people of my charge; on the other hand, they promised me all due obedience in the Lord, and bound themselves to the Presbytery for my adequate support. I am not their hireling, engaged for a certain wage to perform certain defined tasks, and I will have no responsibility in giving currency to any such theory. I have heard an old farmer speak of a certain respected minister in this way: "We hired him for six months before we took him for altogether;" and I must say I don't wonder so much at his language now as I did then, for it seems

to me quite in harmony with the view presented in the above quotation. My theory is that I am as truly a servant of the Presbyterian Church as any Member of the Church, and that I am under the authority of the Church, placed over a congregation not under it, and that I am bound to labour faithfully in my charge, not to please the people and gain their applause, but to please my Master, the Great Head of the Church, and to fulfil my vows made, not to the people, but to the Presbytery. From such a theory as this, a Sustentation Fund naturally springs, the whole Church taking order that all her servants are at least secured a competency, and that they are therefore able, with boldness and faithfulness, to discharge their solemn office. Mr. King says that the Church undertook to regulate the whole salary of her ministers it might be worth while establishing a Fund which would accomplish so great an object, but he knows very well that no such attempt as that is practicable, even if it were desirable. No, all that the Church need attempt is to secure a minimum stipend for her ministers, leaving ample room for the exercise of congregational generosity after that minimum is reached. I leave other points for future consideration.

P. MCF. MCLEOD.

THE PROPOSED SUPPLEMENTING SCHEME.

MR. EDITOR,—I have read with much interest the second letter of Mr. McLeod on the Scheme proposed before the Church for securing a more adequate support for the ministry. I find it to be, in the main, a re-statement, in a fuller form, of the positions laid down in the former letter, without almost any endeavour to meet the arguments by which I had thought to have shown these positions to be either weak or wholly untenable. We have the same plea for the adoption of the Sustentation Scheme, that it secures the dignity and the independence of ministers even of the humblest charges, which the Supplemental Scheme in some way sacrifices, entirely ignoring the facts which attention was called in my last communication that in the Draft Scheme the distinction between aid-receiving and aid-giving congregations is almost its most prominent feature; that an entirely different treatment is prescribed for the two, liberties which the one enjoys being denied to the other; that an aid-receiving congregation, failing to fulfil the engagement to the Fund under which it came when its pastor was settled, may have its case brought before the Assembly by the Committee, and be removed by it, if it see cause, from the minimum stipend platform. I firmly believe that under the Scheme, were it adopted, the position of a minister in a weak congregation would be, in some respects, less secure and less comfortable than under a properly wrought Supplemental Scheme. Any one can see that under it "the rich contributor" who "withdraws in offence" is just as powerful as at present.

Then the attempt is again made to fasten on the Supplemental Scheme the "charity to the poor" character, without any attempt to show how the aid which is given under the Sustentation Scheme becomes a "charity" under the Supplemental, when in both cases it is given on precisely the same ground—the obligation under which the Church feels itself placed to maintain the dispensation of the ordinances of religion in localities where, without aid, the Christian people themselves could not do it.

I fear that little benefit can arise from a discussion in which the main points taken are so largely passed by, and unless there is some good prospect of the arguments advanced on the one side and on the other being really faced and dealt with, your readers will, I am sure, thank us for bringing the discussion to an end. There are one or two statements, however, in Mr. McLeod's last letter which cannot be overlooked.

Mr. McLeod charges me with "completely ignoring the principle on which the Sustentation Fund rests," the truth being that in my letter I simply tried to show that the positions taken in his former communication were not capable of defence. In this letter Mr. McLeod states the underlying principle of the Sustentation Fund to be "that it is the duty of the Church as a whole to provide Gospel ordinances wherever needed throughout the country; that it is the duty of each congregation to contribute to the means for this purpose—to cast its contribution into the general treasury of the Church, and ask the