

do. The chief thing that was done for the Church by law, under Constantine, as far as we can discover, was no more than is done by every non-persecuting government of the present day for every religious denomination. At first, he granted them a legal right as a corporate body, to hold such property as might be bestowed by the friends of their cause, which under persecuting Emperors they had not possessed. He took away the sentence of outlawry which had been pronounced against them, and brought the persons and property of Christians under the protection of law. At a late date, he made it lawful for men to bequeath money to the Church at their death, as well as to bestow donations upon it during their lives. But do either of these regulations trench upon what is called the Voluntary principle? It was not till long after this period, that exemption even from taxes was conceded to Church property,—a fertile theme of declamation with many, while, at the same time, the concession is founded on considerations so obvious to common sense, that, in most Christian countries, especially where the Government is popular and under the influence of public opinion, it is willingly granted to all Christian bodies. Among the first things we were requested to do, upon coming into this Province, was to put our name to a petition to the Legislature, to remit the duty chargeable on religious books imported from the United States, for the use of Sabbath Schools and other Societies; and, if we are not mistaken, it was a native of the States who requested our signature. But this was done on the very principle, on which exemption from taxation was claimed for Church property in general. And, in truth, Schools, and Colleges, and Churches, when properly administered, are obviously as much for the public at large, as the institutions of Civil Government themselves; and it would be little more absurd, though not quite so convenient for those who impose them, to tax the taxes themselves, as to tax property devoted to the secular education or religious instruction of the people. The offence committed by the administrators of the revenues of the Church, was not that, in any age or country, they obtained their income from improper parties, or that they obtained too much, for they could have beneficially employed it all, and done more good with it, than any money laid out in any other way. Their offence was, that they sought to acquire it, by appeals to improper motives, and laid it out upon their lusts, instead of laying it out for the glory of God, and the good of mankind, by the advancement of true religion in the world. It is astonishing, therefore, how men confound things that differ, and talk of the establishment of the Church under Constantine, as, if not the very source, yet the grand cause of its corruption; when he did little, if any thing, more for it than is done by the Government of the United States, and every non-persecuting government professing Christianity. It is still more astonishing that the

advocates of the Voluntary principle should represent the corruptions of the Church in connexion with its wealth, as springing from its State endowments, when the contradiction of this stares us in the face, from every page of the history of the transactions between Church and State. Yet, from frequently hearing such things, it would seem that men come at length to read history, under prepossessions and preconceptions which absolutely blind them. Through the whole track of ages, when the iniquity of Church establishments is supposed to have been perpetuated, the main efforts of the State were directed, not to fill the coffers of the Church, but to prevent them from being filled to overflowing by the influx of wealth through voluntary channels. When they did legalize by State enactment the exaction of clerical dues, it was generally to set some bounds to the unlimited and irregular exaction of the same dues by the Church without the sanction of a law. The evils in the Church of Rome stand much more closely connected as cause and effect, with the money raised in it on the Voluntary principle, than with what it receives by State enactment. Are there fewer evils connected with it in Ireland, under the Voluntary system, than here under a provision by law? Are its corruptions here more evident, or of a worse kind, in connexion with its legal endowment, than with the sums raised by mere Church influence, that is, on the Voluntary principle? But is the principle therefore an evil one, because it has been abused; to say so, would be about as good logic as that often employed against Establishments, when every institution to which the name is, or can be given, is spoken of as bearing the same general character of impiety and injustice. Thus the same arguments are applied to the Church of Scotland as to the Church of Rome, and the only differences allowed to mitigate the supposed evils of State connexion, are the purer doctrines and reformed discipline of the one as compared with the other. Now, there never was, nor now is, any Church, in any country, in communion with Rome, where the relation between it and the State, bears almost the slightest resemblance to that between the State and the Church of Scotland. Can any instance be pointed out in the history of the Church of Rome, where the State defined the exact amount of income each minister should receive, and where the Church as distinctly interdicted all attempts on the part of the clergy to increase it, by dues for any acts of duty, or by appeals to the superstition or even the liberality of their people? Nor in practice has this rule ever been broken through. The income of the ministers of the Church of Scotland can be ascertained to a farthing, and, if excessive, it would not be hard to find a remedy. But they are not so; and should they cease to be furnished from the present source, we fear it would silence the voice from the pulpit, in many a parish, without causing it to proclaim any sounder

doctrine in those where it might continue to be maintained. Till those who support the Voluntary system, put the support of their ministers upon something of the same, sufficient, definite, secure, rational, and just footing, their system will be, what Dr. Chalmers is said to have called it, a failure. They will, as they do in the States and every where else where it prevails, keep the majority of their ministers in a state of uneasy, uncertain dependence upon the caprices of their congregations, that tends more to produce subserviency to the wishes of the people than faithfulness to the truth of God, in a state so nearly bordering upon absolute poverty, that, without checking pride or promoting purity, engenders discontent in themselves and their families, and, in many ways, distracts their minds, and impairs their efficiency. The same ill-regulated, penuriously supported system stunts the learning of the Ministry, by its niggardly and uncertain provision for Colleges, and the support of students, and the few inducements and many discouragements it throws in the way of those who could support themselves. Nor can the deficiencies of the student be easily supplied after entering on the duties of the ministry; a scanty income, a half wandering life, with no fixed home, alike forbid libraries and study. The States are often appealed to as a proof of the superior excellency and efficiency of the Voluntary system, but do facts bear out the appeals? They possess far more wealth than was to be found in Scotland, at the Reformation; have their people done as much for their country in the shape of Schools, Colleges and Churches, as was done in poor, feudal, half barbarous Scotland? In the older settled States, there was often some legal provision for religion, and often also a half voluntary, half legal arrangement made for its support by the people themselves. Do the new States, in these more wealthy days of absolute voluntarism, manage things better? Does the Church present in these a scene more grateful for the Christian to contemplate, than it did in the old ones, even when many things in connexion with religion were ordained by a law? Unless we are greatly mistaken, there is a growing feeling in the States among the Clergy, and among all whose attention is turned with interest to the subject, not that they require State enactments for the support of the Ministry, but that the Voluntary principle, for system it cannot be called, greatly requires, nay urgently demands, to be brought under the control of some more definite regulations, than it has yet been made to submit to.

We have not written thus, in defence of Church Establishments, or a provision for the Clergy by the State. We have no such intention. In this country, and things seem tending to the same point throughout the world, it is to the Voluntary principle we have to look for the support and advancement of the Church. We hold it of infinitely more importance in the present day, to