

CHARGE

To the Clergy and Churchwardens of the Archdeaconry of York, at a Visitation holden at Thornhill, on Thursday, April 22; at Hamilton, on Tuesday, April 27; and at London, on Thursday, April 29, 1852; by the Ven. A. N. BETHUNE, D.D., Archdeacon of York.

Concluded from our last.

REV. BRETHREN, AND MR. CHURCHWARDENS:

How completely, my brethren, do facts like these disprove the arguments that are, in these days, so loosely and recklessly advanced against an established and national provision for religion! How entirely do they overturn the allegation, so wildly put forth, and so strangely credited, that a national provision for God's Church is a national sin; and that, by such an application of the worldly resources of a people, a national curse is provoked, rather than a blessing ensured! What God has thus appointed, must surely be right—State endowments for religion, or call them by what name we will, cannot be wrong, when enforced thus explicitly and positively by a Divine command.

God, it is evident, settled this amongst His ancient people for the consolidation and perpetuation of His Church in all after times, rather than because it was demanded by present wants or circumstances. At the time when the whole economy of the Church was thus regulated and completed, we should hardly imagine amongst the people of Israel an indisposition to make bountiful and sufficient offerings for the service of their heavenly Benefactor. It was a time in which they were under the influence of continual miracles—when signs and wonders were being wrought perpetually for their deliverance; a time in which, of all others, the voluntary system would have worked prosperously. Yet, God, nevertheless, for the benefit of His Church in all future ages, fixed for it a permanent endowment. And we can understand, that where a completeness of organization was settled for the State, it would be derogatory to, and a slight of God, if the same care and pains were not given to the structure of His Church. The comparison would, at no time, be advantageous, if men should see an orderly and systematic, and well-balanced arrangement of what was to contribute to their temporal welfare; but what affected their souls' interests and pertained to them as immortal beings, left to individual impulse or caprice. The contrast would, at no time, be edifying or beneficial, if the State—of man's erection and for man's welfare, as a mortal being,—should exhibit every care and liberal provision; while the Church of God's appointment and for God's honour, should be left like a child in the wilderness, without position or resting-place, to be sustained by a passing charity, and with nothing but the impulse of a sympathetic benevolence to keep it from famishing.

3. It is strange that Christian men should be found speaking against the lawfulness of State endowments for religion, and asserting that they are in contravention of the Divine command, with such facts as these before them. But, they will argue, this was a condition of things applicable to the Jewish economy, and not calculated for the purity and simplicity of the Christian dispensation. We are bound, however, to affirm in reply, that if the principle be correct in the one case, it cannot be inapplicable in the other: there is nothing in the nature of things which can justify the distinction that is alleged to exist between the two. We might be affected by such a presumed distinction, if we discovered in the New Testament one word prohibitory of that principle—one word there which went to say or teach that public appropriations for religion were, under the Gospel, not to be made. We must infer, indeed, quite the reverse from several facts and incidental statements in the New Testament itself. We read there of the existence in the earliest days of Christianity, of a common fund for charitable and ecclesiastical purposes; because a voluntary and impulsive generosity—giving to-day, and withholding to-morrow—was not deemed effectual to that end. Moreover, we find St. Paul frequently speaking of the obligation of Christians in this respect, in a way that assures us that the analogy with the Jewish dispensation was meant to be kept up: for example this, "The Lord hath ordained, that they who preach the Gospel should live by the Gospel;" that is, peremptorily and positively, and not as a whim or mere feeling might dictate. It does not appear to be left to individual liberty or choice; but a constraint and obligation, by a Divine ordinance, is imposed.

And if we should not find, in the New Testament, any very express directions, or any formal arrangements, upon this point, it was from the same cause that minute directions upon some other subjects were omitted there,—because it was unnecessary to be thus explicit. It was unnecessary to inform men, in a minute and detailed manner, of the way in which they were to maintain the ministers of the Church; because, from all antecedent rule and custom, they were sufficiently instructed in that duty. They would naturally act upon that rule, and carry it out fully, as soon as it was in their power to do so. And history teaches us that they did so. When circumstances warranted, gifts increased. The "common fund" became, in time, a systematic organization: individuals or congregations did not act upon separate impulses, but all their gifts and offerings flowed into this common treasury. And that it might have this common aspect and influence, the Bishop of each Diocese was placed in charge of it,—to be allotted and distributed, under his direction and according to his judgment, for the maintenance of the ministry and other ecclesiastical objects. Here, then, was an endowment; the best which, under circumstances, Christians could make. Those were days of persecution, when such concentrated or tangible pro-

perty as landed reservations, for instance, would,—as is unhappily the case now,—very speedily be seized upon, to gratify the spite of pagan priests or satisfy a private cupidity.

The case was different when the Emperors became Christians, and when Christian influence, from the vastly increased number of converts, was extended far and wide. Then gifts and offerings were proportionally larger, and the ancient rule of maintaining religion by specific appropriations of a tenth, or even more, not only came to be universally acted upon amongst Christians, but received the sanction of law, and was made binding in a fixed and unalterable way.

4. It was, my brethren, in accordance with the sacred principle always believed in, and acted upon, until comparatively a very late period, that a provision was made here, in this Province, for the steady and permanent maintenance of the blessings of religion as taught and diffused by the National Church. In devising a new Constitution for this Province, care was taken that its religious welfare should be provided for,—that means should be set apart by which the teaching of Christian truth, through all time, should be ensured. If we are correct in saying, that the Clergy Reserves in this Province were the gift of that excellent monarch George the Third, because he sanctioned the appropriation with all the heartiness which befitted a Christian and virtuous king; we are equally right in saying that they were the gift of the British nation, declared by a solemn enactment of the House of Lords and Commons. It was not a mere act of the Royal prerogative, but the joint work of the three branches of the Imperial Legislature.

I need not review the question of right as touching this property, nor the hard struggles and fierce contests to which it has given rise. It is needless now to do so, because a settlement of the protracted dispute has long since been effected by Imperial legislation; for whatever may have been our conscientious objections to the Act of 1840, the Church of England in this Province with one voice accepted the decision which it made of the "vexed question," and regarded it as a final adjudication of the whole dispute. It was also generally believed that the public mind would now for ever be at rest upon this matter, and that we should henceforth enjoy the priceless blessing of religious peace. But we have been disappointed. Worldly politics, and the anti-Christian schemes and unscrupulous devices into which a war of party disputes, combining so many temptations to personal aggrandizement, are wont to drive men who engage warmly in them, opened again this question to the heat and strife of the worst days of the past.

The Church could not stand still in the warfare that raged around her; but, with gentle mien and forbearing temper, assumed her strong shield of faith, and her invincible weapons of truth. The conflict, through the blessing of heaven, has thus far not been detrimental to her, nor shaken her in the least from her position of strength. The recent appeal to the country,—backed, on the part of the enemies of the Church, with every calumny that could excite the popular prejudice against her,—has resulted in a considerable gain in the number of her zealous friends in the popular branch of the Legislature, and the significant exclusion of those who, during the last two years, had, in our Legislative Assembly, taken the prominent lead against her.

5. The most unhappy and repulsive feature in this recent agitation is the *motive* by which those profess to be actuated who have been the most forward in it. It has not been a mere strife of sect, nor a jealousy as to the manner of partition; it was not the claiming by one of what was considered to be too largely held by another; no honest rivalry, as we might call it, as to which religious body should have it in their power to effect most good by means of this public provision. No: but, in opposition to all Divine Revelation, in contravention of all Christian practice, the declared motive and the industrious effort has been to alienate this property entirely from religion, and separate it from every use that might bear upon the welfare of the Church of God.

The plea is,—and that will catch the fancy, because it affects the personal interests of many,—that the property, called Clergy Reserves, should be appropriated for the benefit of general education; for the wider extension of that knowledge, which, without the sanctifying influence of religion, only increases man's capacity and power to do mischief. But, taking up the arguments of the mere utilitarian, if an education merely for the work and enterprises of the world be important,—and we do not deny it—should not efforts incomparably greater be made to secure a religious education,—an education for the soul and for immortality? Is it not a general admission, that we should never get on, in law or jurisprudence, or in the commerce of life, without the application, in some way and to some extent, of a moral and religious restraint. We are obliged, in many things connected with the transactions of life, to rely upon the force of conscience; in many cases, to depend upon the solemn value attached to an oath. But where would be the efficacy or meaning of an oath without a religious conviction? How soon would its solemnity disappear, and itself become a mere word and formality, if there should be no engrafted religious belief? We depend, then, as a people, upon the value attached to religious obligations; and we virtually affirm, as with one voice, that such obligations are to be taught, and urged, and deepened, and diffused. And yet persons, avowing this very conviction, will recklessly fling away the means for maintaining and perpetuating the knowledge of these obligations, and even rob the Church of God—the appointed agent for upholding and diffusing them,—of the heritage assigned her for that very end.

6. While such, my brethren are the devices,

and such the open warfare against us, it does not become us to be passive or silent. It appears, in this emergency, to be most desirable that each parish should exhibit, in its leading members, at least, an organisation which would be ready for any action when danger is threatened, and where constitutional resistance is imperatively called for. Combination and union for the protection and welfare of the Church is, under such circumstances, not only justifiable but necessary.

7. There is nothing, in this warfare against our sacred cause which has distressed us more than the fact that a British statesman should, for an instant, have countenanced this popular delusion, or have uttered a word that could favour a scheme of spoliation so entirely at variance with the spirit of the British constitution, and so adverse to the teaching of God's holy word. We shall remember that this lamentable concession was not made without some words of accompanying regret, but these were neither pointed nor strong, and the sacrifice of what should be held most sacred, was ready, it appears, to be made.—But let us hope that due reflection upon the injustice, the grievous sin, of such an abandonment of a property on which the spiritual welfare of millions may depend, will only confirm the resolution and make the determination irrevocable, never, while British faith and justice can claim to be respected, to divert one acre of those lands, or of one shilling of their revenue, from the sacred cause to which they have been assigned. We cannot, for an instant, admit the plea that the people of this country may, of right, deal as they please with this property; because it is not now a public property, but one solemnly set apart, and specially dedicated to holy uses: it has for years been employed, in part at least, for religious purposes; and it cannot, without the most flagrant violation of justice, be diverted from such uses, unless it can be proved that it has been perverted to objects hostile to the State, and such as threaten to overturn the moral order or social peace of the country. Nor have we any confidence in the assertion that the Parliament of this country are the best judges of the manner in which this property should be applied any more than that they have the best right to make such an appropriation of it as they may deem expedient. We doubt the one while we deny the other. We doubt the fairness and soundness of the judgment which would be affected by local prejudices, narrow partialities or aversions, and popular impulse and agitation.—And we emphatically deny the right to be inherent, as they contend, in a mere section of the inhabitants of a great Empire. Often, when our worldly interests are concerned, and the bearings of trade and commerce are discussed, we claim to be esteemed and treated as part and parcel of the Empire,—like the inhabitants of one of the counties of England. Let the claim, then, of our fellow subjects in Great Britain and Ireland be treated as reciprocal: let the privilege be conceded to them which we ask for ourselves. Let the principle be admitted and acted upon, that the Clergy Reserves are not the property merely of the inhabitants of this Province, but of the Empire at large,—on the high ground of constitutional right, and for weighty practical reasons also. Our Province is receiving continual accessions of population from the Mother country, and those emigrants, we contend, have a right to every existing privilege in the Colony. It were, therefore, on the part of this Province, an arbitrary assumption of right to make laws or statutes which would abridge them of any such privilege,—of that high religious privilege, especially, which might be thought to reconcile them most to their expatriation from their native land. To alienate this property, then, would be to dispose of that, for some temporal and selfish advantage, which belongs to the millions of our fellow subjects in the United Kingdom, as much as to ourselves. And more,—to alienate this property, would be to deal in a most high-handed and arbitrary way with an inheritance which belongs as much to posterity as to the present generation. It has come to us, emphatically, with an entail,—stamped and bound as such by the most solemn pledges and engagements: and we should be in the last degree presumptuous and unrighteous in exercising a fraud upon, and a palpable injury of posterity, by destroying of our own free will that entail.

Our neighbours in the United States appear to deal more sacredly and righteously with such questions. With them it is held to be unconstitutional to interfere with property conveyed to corporate bodies in trust for sacred purposes. It would be mortifying, if we should be forced to place British justice in unfavourable contrast with republican integrity.

III. But while we contend for a provision for the maintenance of religion which shall be beyond the reach of hazard and uncertainty,—beyond the capriciousness and risk of the voluntary system, as that is now commonly understood and acted upon; we must not, my brethren, under-rate, or feel ourselves relieved from, the obligations which that system, legitimately viewed, undoubtedly comprehends. Christians, it will hardly be denied, are under a constraint just as strong as were the Jews to contribute of their substance to the cause of God; and there is nothing in the force or claims of the Gospel dispensation so low or inferior in comparison of that of the law, as to make us hesitate about the duty of giving at least as large a proportion of that substance now, as they were required to do then. It matters not whether this be an obligation forced upon us by the letter of the law of the land, or not: we are compelled to its exercise by the law of conscience and the law of God.

1. And here, first, let us accurately understand what is the nature and origin of the law of the land upon the subject, where such law exists. Kings and private individuals, out of a property which was undeniably their own, solemnly dedicated to God that proportion of its fruits or revenue

which, from the beginning of time, appears to have been rendered back to the great Giver by the temporary earthly proprietor. That special consecration, made voluntarily and rightly by themselves, they rendered permanent and perpetual by the sanction of law: they bound upon their posterity,—upon all who should hereafter be the possessors of that property,—the same appropriation for pious or charitable uses: it went down from generation to generation with that well-understood and acknowledged entail of one-tenth for God and his Church. Let none say, then that either individuals or the state have power to alienate that entailed appropriation; it is as much the property of God's Church, as the rent or revenue claimed by the owner of any ordinary estate from those to whom he may lease it.

2. But passing by this question, I contend that the obligation of some such appropriation for God's service, rests upon us all; and to our own Master we shall stand or fall, as we obey or neglect that duty. There is a beauty, too, in this voluntary exercise of the obligation to render our dues to God: in the free working of this part of charity, we are better testifying the influence of its whole grace in our hearts. And this indebted appropriation can be given fully and unostentatiously through the medium of the ordinary and long-established channels. It can be made through the annual pew-rent,—the offertory alms,—the direct contribution for the maintenance of ministers,—the fixed allotment to Church Institutions. Through all these it can be distributed fully and equitably. Yet, with the best intentions, there will be but a capricious and doubtful, and perhaps a scant appropriation to God's cause and service, if the rule of "laying by in store," be not acted upon rigidly and conscientiously. There must be an habitual reservation, a systematic setting apart of what thus belongs to God; else, when the claim is presented, and this most sacred of all dues is called for, it may not be ready, and there will be perchance a shuffling excuse, and at last the hard-hearted denial of the whole.

3. In speaking of the channels and agencies through which that bounty may be made to effect its pious end, I cannot refrain from mentioning specifically that valuable institution, the Church Society; in and through which the alms and offerings of Churchmen may be made to work in harmony for God's glory, and the welfare of our fellow Christians. But this Society has been too long and too well known amongst us, to require from me here any urgency of appeal in its behalf: it works for a large variety of pious and benevolent purposes; and if, like other institutions of human construction, and upon which human infirmity and temptation can be brought to bear, it should have its season of shadow and adversity, we shall rather help to dissipate the cloud than suffer the darkness or distress to accumulate and deepen around it. Earnestly, then, would I urge the formation of an Association in every parish or mission where one does not already exist,—the appointment annually of active officers,—and the steady and vigorous working of the whole machinery which the constitution furnishes. And I would venture to speak strongly on the duty incumbent upon all Clergymen in the Diocese to make the collections in its behalf, or for its trusts, at or as near as possible to the time when they are required in the announcements made by the authority of the Bishop. I mention this, because in glancing over the lists of periodical acknowledgments contained in the Annual Reports of the Society, we observe many cases in which, for one or other, or perhaps for all, of such objects, no collections have been made. I do not think, my reverend brethren, that we have here any discretionary power. Whether the object of the collection accords, or not, with our own private opinion of its fitness or importance, our duty as Clergymen appears to be positive and clear,—to set forth the claim to our people as directed, and leave the result to their own appreciation, by God's help and direction, of its value or urgency.

IV. We have spoken of spiritual destitution,—many desolate places in the land,—a vast moral desert, and bleak solitude around us: while, then, we turn our anxious thoughts to the means and resources for maintaining those who are to cultivate and till it, we are bound to look, with equal earnestness, for those who shall be the labourers in this wide and fruitless region. If we had, at this moment, boundless pecuniary means at our command, we have, confessedly, not the men on whose maintenance they could be expended. It is vain to be looking to the Mother Country for an adequate supply of labourers in our Colonial vineyard: we may, now and then, at long intervals and in scanty supply, obtain those who can bring us from our father-land the knowledge and the experience which there are there so many better opportunities of obtaining. But the children of the Church in the Mother Country are alive to their own wants now, in a degree which a quarter of a century ago was unknown: the Church there is, on every side, lengthening her cords and strengthening her stakes; and, therefore, there are but few to spare for work in the Lord's vineyard beyond the seas. Moreover, the richest endowments of learning acquired in the unrivalled Universities of the Mother Country,—the invaluable experience obtained by judicious and faithful training in her admirable parochial system,—the knowledge of mankind gathered from association with the high and gifted and excellent of the earth,—all these, if transported to our shores, would not alone, or at once, compensate for the want of that local experience which is so essential to ministerial success; that sympathy with the feelings and habits and wants of the country, without which the best zeal and the highest talents would have comparatively a barren exercise. While, then, for an adequate numerical supply of ministers, we must look chiefly to ourselves, we are bound to seek for them, and encourage them,