

gregations, and among all our people increased earnestness is required and greater activity should be evinced. Never should we relax our efforts, nor allow our zeal to flag while there is a single soul unsaved. And when Rome teaches us a useful lesson, let us not despise it, nor yet be slow to learn from her. We have a purer system than she possesses, and it is of the utmost importance that all Christ's faithful followers should arouse themselves anew to prayer and labour. Rome is not asleep, but is busy and active. Let us imitate her zeal, and labour more ardently than we hitherto have done.



CHURCH FINANCE AND MINISTERIAL INCOME.

BY THE REV. SAMUEL HOUSTON.

The mode of raising funds for the support of the gospel is gradually undergoing a revolution, if not over the whole Christian world, at least in the Presbyterian Church of the Lower Provinces. That a mode of that description is necessary, that is to say that money has to be taken into account in such a sacred and spiritual organization as a Church of God, hardly needs any defence now. There has been a time when if a man mentioned money from the pulpit except in a muffled and apologetic tone, he ran the risk of destroying his usefulness for all time to come. Of the people there are perhaps a few specimens remaining yet who look upon the advancing tide of growing liberality and the altered spirit of the Christian people under the large measure of attention given to that subject from the pulpit with dismay, and who utter in an undertone that the Church is in danger. If there be any blessing of God resting on the Church it will be seen that such vaticinations are those of false prophets. So insignificant however, in point of number and influence are those becoming, that it is hardly worth while to take them into account in weighing the value of the growth that is going on.

That there was something unsatisfactory in the past mode or modes of Church Finance, the majority of the people now see clearly. The tendency of pew rents was evil and only that. In two directions did the evil work. It excluded the poor altogether, or almost altogether. It was the custom in many Churches to have a certain portion set off and denominated "free pews." This was looked upon as a

very meritorious scheme; it was one that was lauded much. The result, however, was to introduce into the Church of God distinctions, which of all places in the world ought not to be found in the Church. There are plenty that will never enter a Church door rather than proclaim themselves paupers by occupying the free pews. It is very wicked of them acting so, the narrow in means have no business to think in that way, but think in that way they do. It is to be feared that many who occupy the pauper pews are so craven hearted, so lost to self-respect, that it does not matter much whether they attend or not. Then again the pew system works badly in the glaring inequalities which result from it in those that pay for the pews. It compels the hardworking man who has difficulty in making ends meet to pay as much as the millionaire. From that standpoint it is intrinsically indefensible. It would be waste of words and of logic to spend time in battering that down. That want of success attended it is not to be wondered at.

Of late years there has been a discussion going on about what is called "Systematic Benevolence." The phrase badly needs to be explained. It is the doctrine of giving to the Lord on principle, or on system, rather than at random. The whole matter has been at random hitherto. Some men are generous by nature, and they would give large sums from time to time, especially when a powerful or eloquent appeal was made. So much depended on the eloquence of the speaker that for opening of churches or to secure a collection for a church debt the most famous preacher in the body was usually beset with applications, and for the anniversaries of benevolent and religious institutions pat-form orators of oily tongue were much in demand. The collection might be swelled up very considerably by the enthusiasm got up. At last, however, it has entered into the thoughts of many that such an artificial way of supporting the Church or the benevolence of our age is wrong, that there is a more excellent way. Even those that dwell on the quasi-spiritual heights where any reference to "fifty lucre" was heard with ineffable loathing, are beginning to descend to more sober and more practical levels. It is found that ministers as well as other mortals, must pay rent if they live in a house, must pay for food and clothing if they eat and wear, and if they give entertainment to a brother minister when he comes along, more than faith and prayer are needed. It has been discovered, though all have not been initiated into the discovery yet, that they have to pay their bills in hard cash just as other men do. That being so, even were