

THE
CANADIAN PRESBYTER.

MAY, 1857.

DANGERS OF NON-ENDOWED CHURCHES. *J. Hall,*

We have no intention of discussing the general question of religious endowments. Ours is a mere humble design—to express certain observations we have made on the tendencies of those Churches to which endowments are entirely wanting.

The dangers of endowed Churches are obvious enough. They are to be found in the neglect of discipline—the claim to Church privileges as a civil right—the appointment of Ministers without any call from the Christian people—the habit of regarding the cure of souls as a “benefice,” and the Erastian control of the Church by the State, a control in some European countries so rigorous, that the Church is converted into a mere department of the Government. Against these evils, there is no need here to raise any lengthened testimony.

It is more necessary to remark, that non-endowed Churches have their perils too. Though it be granted, that the system of voluntary support is on the whole more healthy than any other, it must not be concealed, that it is attended by certain very serious disadvantages or dangers.

1. *The danger of a restless anarchical spirit.*—Changes, contentions, divisions, often for very slight cause, have been the bane and disgrace of the voluntary Churches of Europe and America. We are quite ready to admit, that an Endowment or Establishment is far from the best and noblest guarantee of Church stability; but we must also say, that it carries a powerful conservative influence which it is very difficult to maintain in its absence, and the alternative to which too often is a “Radicalism,” that knows no dignity, and enjoys no peace. If we are asked to point out a remedy or corrective for this unstable tendency of the non-endowed communities of Christians, we hesitate not to mention, as one of the foremost, an intelligent appreciation of the constitution and principles of the Church, with a firm adherence thereto. The Presbyterian Church, if her children are faithful, ought to be especially safe from the disorder to which we refer, for she has not merely a “Constitution,” but also a “government,”—and government is always essentially conservative. Securities for liberty the Presbyterian