

7. That we may have more of God's presence in our church. I have heard several of the honoured and beloved brethren who have come from Scotland to visit us, mention that now their meetings in Presbyteries, Synods, and Assemblies are in reality means of grace. Discord and contention and angry discussion are unknown. They can feel how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity. They can meet, deliberate, and separate refreshed in spirit and mutually encouraged. Oh! how delightful had we the same state of things prevailing among ourselves! Generally there is much brotherly love amongst us. In many of our Presbyteries a vote is almost unknown. We enjoy much pleasing intercourse with one another. But I fear that in general we cannot speak of our meetings as means of grace. But should we not aim at this? And is not this a matter that we should lay to heart, and hear upon our hearts at a throne of grace? Ministers have few opportunities of meeting together in this land. How desirable, then, that when we do meet, we should seek to water each other's souls, and to enjoy, as the Apostles did on more than one occasion, when they were assembled together, the comforting and cheering presence of our glorious and ever-living Lord and Master.

I remain, dear sir,
Yours, affectionately,
A FELLOW LABOURER.

To the Editor of the Record.

LETTERS

FROM A PRESBYTERIAN CLERGYMAN TO A LADY UNDER SPIRITUAL CONCERN.

LETTER I.

DEAR MADAM.—I received yours, and regret that till now I had it not in my power to reply. In attempting to do this, I find considerable difficulties; for subjects of this kind are far more easily discussed in conversation than by letter.

Permit me to say that the spirit of your letter gives me very great satisfaction. I can but think it a token for good when the concerns of the soul are felt in their importance and interest. The jealousy of yourself which you feel, your dissatisfaction with your attainments, and your desire of increasing experience, appear to me to indicate the life or religion. You say your character is the object of your own suspicion, and you are afraid you have been formal all your days, because your character has so faint a resemblance to that of the true christian. But does not the true christian always fall short of his own conception of what he ought to be, and of the scripture exhibitions of the christian character? Did not Paul say, "I have not yet attained, neither am I already perfect; and did he not call himself a "wretched man" on that account? Does he not tell us that in all christians "the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh?" You cannot be too sensible of your own defects; and you will be the more sensible of them the more you examine them, and the more you advance in acquaintance with the character, love, and promises of God. But if spiritual languor and weakness, and the prevalence of sin be a burden,—if the sense of these evils makes us estimate the deliverance which is by Christ, and long for the full enjoyment of that deliverance, although it cannot come but by death,—if we love that law of God to which we perceive our own disobedience,—and if the sense of our own great deficiency, in the ardour and activities and elevation of the christian life, lead us to God, as in Psalm cxix. 25,—we possess, I think, the true features of christian character. You hint that you are not sufficiently affected with sin. But who ever was? We may be truly humbled for it, and yet there may be defects in our repentance and sorrow, as there are in all the christian's principles and exercise. In order to be more impressed with the holiness and justice of God, so as to hate sin more, we must contemplate those perfections of God in his law, and in the cross of Christ. In order to be more affected with the holiness and justice

of God in the punishment of sin, let us consider the transcendent excellencies of Christ, who suffered for sin, and his relation to the Father, and let us consider the holiness and justice of God as not in opposition to his good-will to men; but that the Lord Jesus Christ, as we may see in the atonement, is offered to ourselves, and has opened up an honourable egress for mercy. You suspect that you have embraced the atonement only through fear. Well; is not this principle addressed in order to bring us to the atonement? Who ever came to it by faith without being agitated first of all by a principle of fear? Was it not this principle that brought so many to Christ when Peter preached? And for what "selfish ends" do you come to the atonement? Is it for escaping wrath? And is not this the very end for which the atonement is exhibited? Are we not called to come to it for our own benefit? But although fear has brought you to the atonement, I doubt not that you feel the operation of other principles respecting it, and that you have some "joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have received the atonement." Or, if you have not attained much joy, I doubt not that you have desires after God is reconciled; and such desires are surely congenial to the spirit of a true saint.

There is one part of your exercise which appears to me exceptional. You say—"How can I believe when I see so little the accomplishment of the promises in my experience,—when I feel so little the power of religion upon my heart? I am afraid the promises will not be accomplished in my experience." I am sure you need not to be informed by me that your faith must not rest upon what you see or feel, but upon the veracity of God. It is the veracity of God, pledged in the promise, and not your experience, that is the ground of your faith. What although you should be deprived of sensible comfort all your days! "God abideth faithful," and will not deny his grace to those who trust in him.

I can only advise you to persevere in the rest of the exercise which you describe, and God will strengthen your heart. Continue to draw your happiness from the Word of God,—to make his law your delight, and to take his promise as the food of your soul,—to look up to him for his salvation, and to wait upon him, in the diligent use of means, for the benefits which you have mentioned. If you obtain grace thus to wait upon him, what reason have you to be thankful even for that?

I must be allowed to say that you seem to take too despondent a view of things in your exercise. If it be such as you describe (of which I have no doubt), would to God it were more common!

Let me beseech you, my dear madam, to remember that we must not despise "small things," and that we must not be ungrateful for them. We are not to be contented with what we have attained, nor to be lifted up with them. But then we must be grateful to God for what he has wrought in us. This is as much our duty as to sorrow for defects.

May the Lord lift up the light of his countenance upon you, and give you peace.—I remain, dear madam, with sincere wishes for your establishment and comfort, yours,

FILIUS CONSOLATIONIS.

☞ We are compelled, from want of room, to reserve the other letter until our next publication.

SUSTENTATION FUND.

At a meeting of the Sustentation Board, Home Mission Committee, and College Committee of the Synod of the Presbyterian Church of Canada, held in Knox's Church, Hamilton, on the 3rd and 4th August, 1847, it was resolved by the Joint Committee, *inter alia*,

"That a distinct view of the Sustentation Scheme, as it has been modified by the Synod and Commission since its first publication, be prepared, printed, and sent to each minister and session, prefaced by a statement of the considerations that ought to commend the scheme to the immediate and universal adoption of congregations.

Mr. BURNS was requested to prepare this statement.

CIRCULAR,

Addressed to the Congregations of the Presbyterian Church of Canada.

At a meeting of the Synod's Sustentation Board, held in Hamilton, on the 3rd and 4th days of August, 1847, it was deemed expedient, in consideration of the importance of the sustentation scheme to the being and well-being of the church in this land, and in consideration of its being, in many places, either unknown or very imperfectly understood, to draw up a distinct view of the scheme as it has been modified by the Synod and Commission since its first publication, and that the same be printed and sent to every minister and session.

No plan, it is believed, has yet been devised, in all respects so much in unison with the spirit of Presbyterianism, as a common fund for the sustentation of the gospel ministry. The scheme adopted by our church is faithfully earned out, either as it now is, or with some modifications, is well calculated to accomplish the end designed by it. It is subject of deep regret, that this important matter has not been taken up more generally and cordially by the various congregations. Perhaps it is too far in advance of the state of religion amongst us—better calculated for the church as it should be than as it at present exists. This very consideration should recommend the scheme all the more to the immediate and universal adoption of our church. Let all the other departments of our ecclesiastical polity be elevated to a higher standard—let us aim at greater things.

The sustentation fund, in the language of the late Dr. Chalmers, "is, as a natural means, the main pillar of the church, being that which is to give it efficiency, stability, and expansion." It gives to congregations a system of management by which the liberality of the people may be more generally called forth, and secures something like uniformity in carrying out, on an enlarged and comprehensive scale, measures for the support of the gospel throughout the length and breadth of the land. It will place all the ministers of the church more upon a footing of equality, and, if properly supported by the prayers and contributions of the people, will supply a competence for each. It will form an additional bond of union, by which ministers and all connected with the church will be more closely knit together by a common bond in a common cause. Like members of the same family, all our ministers will enjoy alike the property or share in the adversity of the brotherhood. They will be recognized and provided for, not so much as the pastors of particular congregations, as on the more catholic principle of their being the servants of Christ. Contributions will be given, not to individual ministers, but to him whose ministers they are. Ministers will be at liberty, more fully and freely, to declare the whole counsel of God, in regard to the imperative duty, incumbent upon all, to contribute, as the Lord has prospered them, to the advancement of his cause. The missionary character of the church, "as life and its glory," will be more fully developed. Wealthy congregations will not be eased—poor congregations will neither be burdened nor left destitute.

A common fund for the support of the gospel is no new and untried expedient. The great and good men who led in the organization of the Free Church of Scotland, when they reformed the church to something like her primitive purity and simplicity, revived also the mode of her temporal support, after the apostolic pattern. The community of goods, spoken of in Acts iii. 41, 45, and iv. 32, 34, 35, among the early christians, is not to be understood so much as a doing away with the rights of property, as a destruction of the selfish principle, and a general exercise of that charity that prompts not "to look every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others." It is obvious from St. Paul's epistles, that an absolute surrender of property was not required of the primitive christians. Their abundant liberality was their own spontaneous act—the result