

## OUR CONTRIBUTORS.

### THE PROPOSED SUPPLEMENTING SCHEME.—III.

MR. EDITOR,—In the interest of a wise settlement of the important matter now happily engaging a large measure of the Church's attention, the better support of the Gospel ministry, it is very desirable that there should be the fullest discussion of the methods, by the one or the other of which it is proposed to secure the end contemplated. This discussion will be carried on in the various Presbyteries. It is desirable, however, that it should not be confined to these. We are fortunate in possessing, in THE CANADA PRESBYTERIAN, a medium for a more general and more public examination of the merits of the two Schemes before the Church. Holding this view, I was glad to see in your last number a letter on the subject from the Rev. Mr. McLeod, from whom it has received, as everyone knows, a great deal of attention.

I agree with Mr. McLeod in thinking that the general tendencies of any Scheme for the better support of the ministry, as these affect the spiritual life of the Church, the proper authority of Presbyteries and Sessions, and the position of the minister, should not be overlooked in the discussion of the question. They might even come to form a very large element in arriving at a right settlement of it. I differ with Mr. McLeod in his estimate of the tendencies of the two Schemes now before the Church, and with your permission I will submit the grounds of this difference. Your intelligent readers will form their own judgment.

The first point of distinction between the two Schemes which Mr. McLeod alleges, without, however, any attempt at proof, is this: the Supplementing Scheme "encourages a growing tendency to a miserable congregationalism throughout our borders;" the Sustentation Scheme "kills congregationalism." I confess that I feel at a loss how to deal with this statement on account of the vagueness of the term employed. Strictly speaking, "congregationalism" is that system of Church government which vests all ecclesiastical power in the membership of a single congregation. It can scarcely be in this sense that the word is used, for by the Supplementing Scheme the congregation requires no power which it does not at present possess, and the Superior Courts lose none. Neither can it be employed to denote the action of the congregation in raising moneys for its own purposes, as distinct from those of the general body; for even under the Sustentation Scheme it is recognised as the duty of each congregation to meet its running expenses, to provide for the interest of debt, etc. etc., while the privilege is conceded to the larger and wealthier congregations to make whatever addition they choose to the sum received from the Common Fund, as the salary of the pastor. We could not afford to have congregationalism, in this sense of the word, killed. The term is probably employed to denote the disposition manifested by a congregation to exert itself for its own interests, to the either partial or total neglect of the general interests of the body; and then the epithet "miserable" is not too strong a one to apply to it. But the question arises, how can a Scheme which, while allowing the other general Schemes of the Church, collegiate and missionary, to remain in vigorous operation, proposes to raise at least half as much more as at present for the increase of the smaller stipends, and to raise it largely from congregations which would not be directly benefited by it, be said to encourage congregationalism of this evil kind; and how can another Scheme, which expressly provides that the congregation paying into the Common Fund the amount of the equal dividend, may give its own minister as much more as it may feel able to do, be said to "kill it?" No doubt there is far too much, on the part of congregations as of individuals, of each looking on its "own things, and not also on the things of others;" but it may be permitted to doubt whether the tendency is, as the letter represents, a "growing" one "throughout our borders." Without taking a blindly optimistic view, I believe it to be the reverse. The matter is one which can be easily put to the test. In 1875-6, the whole income of the Church was \$982,672, the income for the missionary and other Schemes, including the sum of \$22,844 for College building, was \$117,259, or less than 12

per cent. of the whole. In 1880-81, the whole income was \$1,245,495; the income for the missionary and other Schemes was \$171,187, or nearly 14 per cent. The difference, it is true, is not very great, but it is in the right direction; and taking into account the large sums which were being raised at the latter period for the erection of churches and reduction of debt, it is matter for congratulation and thanksgiving that the interest in the general work of the Church has more than kept pace with the congregational expenditure.

Another point which Mr. McLeod makes against the Supplementing Scheme, as compared with the Sustentation one, is, that "it fails to recognise the overseers of the Church." Here again I am at a loss as to the meaning. "The overseers of the Church" may be the General Assembly, the Presbyteries, or the Sessions. As for the first, the Committee appointed to administer the Scheme is the creature of the Assembly, and fully responsible to it. For the second, it is provided in the first Article, that "the list of Supplemented congregations shall embrace only such charges as have pastors duly called by the people and inducted by the Presbytery, and, as in the judgment of the Presbytery, are entitled to assistance in the support of the ministry." The power of the Presbytery is thus fully recognised, and its favourable judgment in each case made a condition of aid. It is to say less than the truth to affirm that this is done as completely under the Supplementing as under the Sustentation Scheme. As I am simply defending the Supplementing Scheme in this letter, I shall not say more as to the bearing of the respective Schemes on Presbyterian authority. If it is necessary, something may be afterwards said as to the extensive powers with which the Sustentation Scheme proposes to arm the Committee. But perhaps the meaning is that the Session is not properly honoured under the Scheme, especially as the statement is made in another part "that Sessions are in many instances being overshadowed by the managers." It is admitted that the Supplementing Scheme fails to recognise the Session, and does nothing to protect it against the encroachment of Managers' Boards, if such is anywhere attempted. The reason is obvious. The Session has most important functions to discharge in our congregational life, but under our system of government the raising of moneys for the support of the ministry is not one of them. And at any rate both the Schemes which are before the Church are equally silent respecting the Session.

The third point of difference which Mr. McLeod seeks to establish, and that to which probably the largest importance is attached, is that the Sustentation Fund "upholds the dignity of the ministry and its independence," while the Supplementing Scheme is "based on charity to the poor, and introduces an unhappy element into the ministerial standing of brethren aided" from it. Now, it may be at once admitted that if it were possible to establish and sustain a Common Fund, from which all the ministers of the Church should receive their full support, that support being regulated by the importance of their fields of labour and the expenses of living in each, without any other condition than that they should be ministers in good standing, and doing faithfully and according to their ability the work of the pastorate, the independence of the ministry would be secured to an extent that is not possible under a Supplementing Scheme. But everyone knows that this was not the character of the Sustentation Fund of the Free Church of Scotland even at the time of its origination, and it is still less its character to-day, and any one who gives even a hasty glance at the Sustentation Scheme now before the Presbyteries of the Church must see that it is very far indeed from being its character. What are the facts? First, a very considerable number of ministers—not less than an eighth or ninth of the whole—would have no share in the equal dividend, their congregations being unable to comply with Regulation 1, requiring an annual contribution of not less than \$500; second, a number much larger, ministering to the more numerous and wealthy congregations, would receive only a fractional part of their salary from the Fund, a large portion of it coming directly from their own congregations; and third, any minister in an aid-receiving congregation might, according to Regulation 6, have his title to the equal dividend called in question, and the case of his congregation brought before the Assembly, through its failure to remit to the Common Fund the amount

agreed on when he was inducted into its charge. Now, I do not say that these provisions are not wise, and perhaps even necessary if a Sustentation Scheme is to be adopted; but in view of them, what becomes of the independence of the ministry, and how is it better secured than under the Supplementing Scheme? Under either Scheme the withdrawal of a number of wealthy members, or a reduction in their rate of giving for the support of ordinances, might cause loss and embarrassment to the minister. After all, is it desirable that a minister should be independent in temporal things on the people to whom he ministers in spiritual? I frankly say, that in my opinion it is not. I believe that it is no more desirable than, in the circumstances of our Church, it is attainable. Where it has been secured through private or State endowments, the ministers of the Gospel have neither been, on the whole, more faithful nor more happy.

But if not the independence, the dignity of the ministry, the purity of ministerial standing, is compromised by the Supplementing Scheme. It is asserted to be "based on charity to the poor." I regret extremely that this characterisation should have been applied to the Scheme at present and for many years in operation in the Church, and by means of which deserving and laborious ministers have been enabled to dispense, often with great self-sacrifice, the ordinances of religion at points where, through no fault of theirs, the membership of the Presbyterian Church is small, and in some cases decreasing. I submit that it is wholly undeserved, and that the distinction between the Sustentation Scheme and the Supplementing one is not such as to render the aid given under the one a matter of justice, and that given under the other a matter of "charity to the poor." The primary fact is, that the Presbyterian Church in Canada has a large number of congregations which are too weak to sustain from their own resources a stated ministry. The Church, under a sense of what is due to its adherents, and from an instinct of self-preservation, believes it to be both dutiful and expedient to aid these congregations in sustaining such a ministry. It can do so in two ways: either by instituting a Common Fund for the support of ordinances over the whole Church, and sending back to these congregations out of this Fund as much more than they pay into it as will make a moderate salary for their ministers; or it may leave with them what they are able to raise, and out of another fund, to which all contribute, add as much as will with that make the same moderate salary. I ask your readers to judge with what reason the former can be pronounced an act of justice and the latter one of charity. I understand both to be equally acts of Christian equity—when the Church declares it to be a matter of duty to its Head, and necessary to the protection of the interests committed to it by Him, that a stated ministry should be maintained at any point where its adherents are few and not wealthy; and where it takes the responsibility of asking a minister to labour there, and inducts him into the charge. The addition of such an amount to the people's contribution as will make an adequate salary is a matter of simple and obvious justice—is as little a matter of charity as the payment of the salaries of its treasurers, missionary agent, or professors—and so it has been uniformly regarded by the Committee appointed to administer the Supplementing Fund. The Home Mission Committee, in making grants in aid, has never regarded itself as dispensing a charity. I can easily understand that a Sustentation Fund, especially if unaccompanied by checks applicable only to the weaker charges, should be more agreeable to the feelings of the ministers of these charges than a Supplementing Fund, especially one such as is at present in operation. But no plan of ministerial support can remove the distinction of aid-receiving and aid-giving congregations. This distinction is the most prominent feature in the Sustentation Scheme before the Church. Nine regulations, perhaps all wise and necessary, but certainly some of them very trying, are laid down for guiding the action of the aid-receiving congregations, and for preventing them from taking wrongful advantage of the Common Fund; while three are sufficient to prescribe the duty and the privileges of the aid-giving ones. Anyone can see that the position of Supplemented congregations, and by consequence that of those ministering to them, will be made, by the modified Scheme now submitted, a more stable and comfortable one: the amount of